

# SCUBA DIVING

THE MAGAZINE DIVERS TRUST

SCUBADIVING.COM JULY 2003

## NIGHT SKILLS

# 12

TECHNIQUES FOR  
EASY DIVING  
IN THE DARK

### POSTCARD FROM BELIZE

How To Do Everything  
(Or Nothing)  
In One Week

### GO SOLO

Can You Ditch Your Buddy  
and Dive Safer?

### GET NEUTRAL

5 Tips for Perfect Weightlessness

Dive for the Rest  
of Your Life, P. 78



Turn your brights down: Light reflects off a freediver's mask in the Red Sea.

#BYNDFGJ \*\*\*\*\*AUTO\*\*5-DIGI [REDACTED]

#SCB145 [REDACTED]

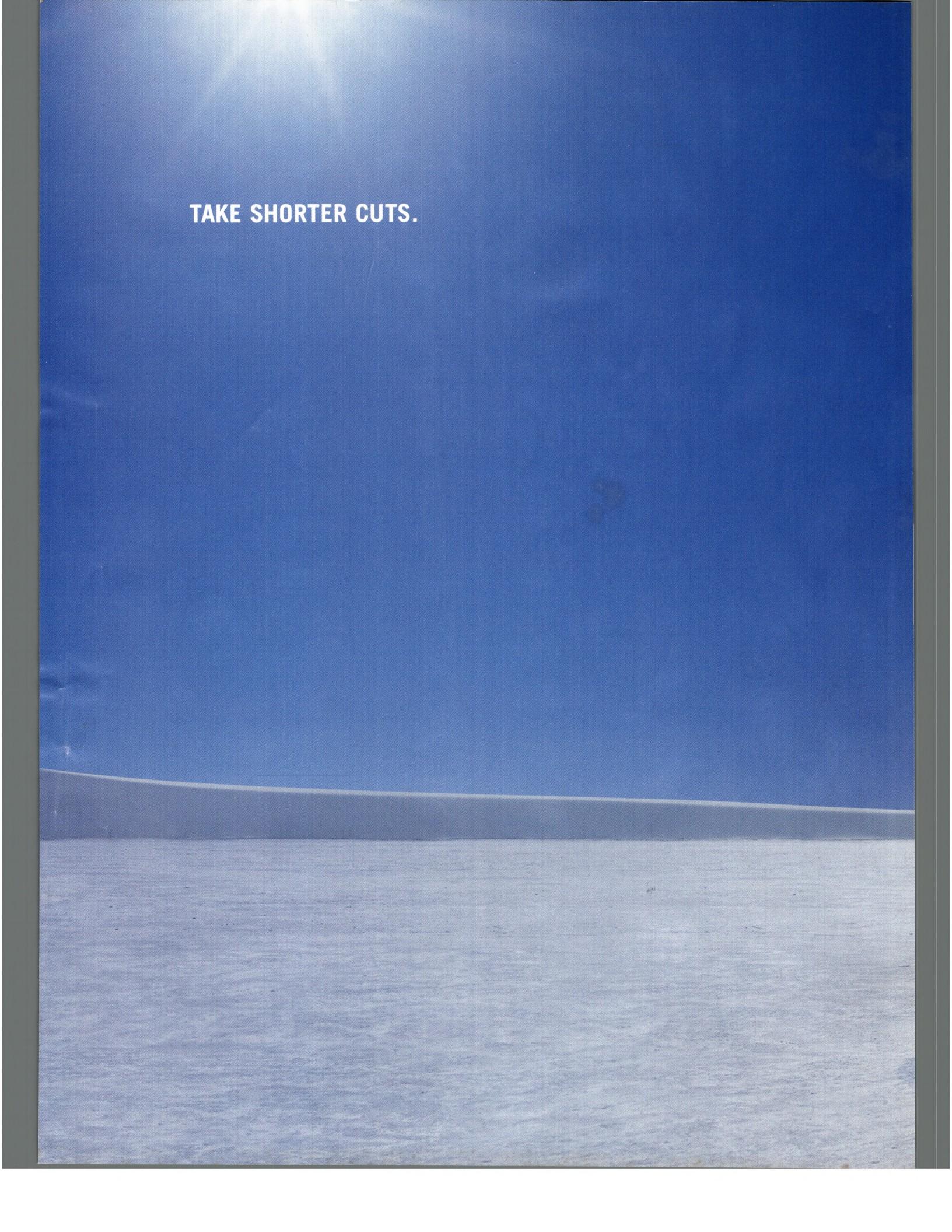
SCJA2A

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P000600

802

A landscape photograph showing a vast, flat, light-colored plain, possibly sand or salt flats, stretching towards a distant horizon under a clear, pale blue sky.

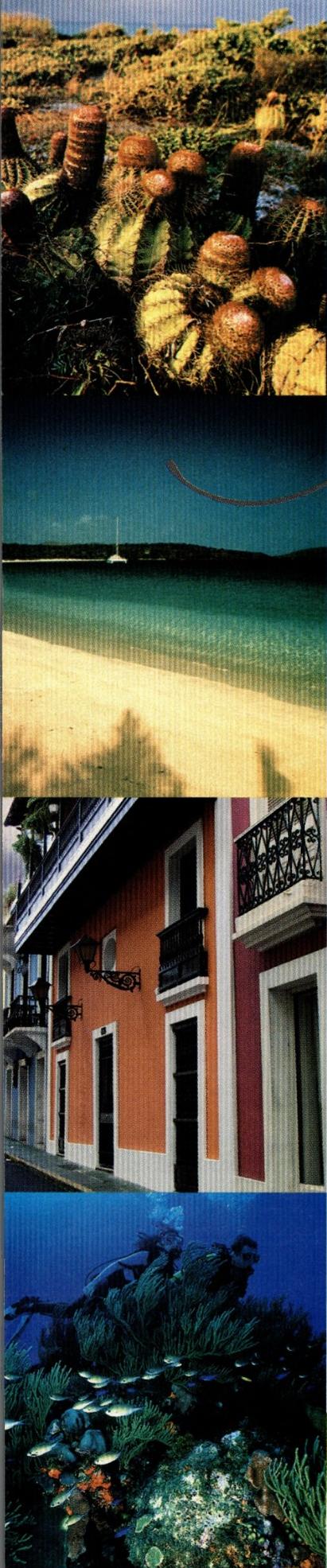
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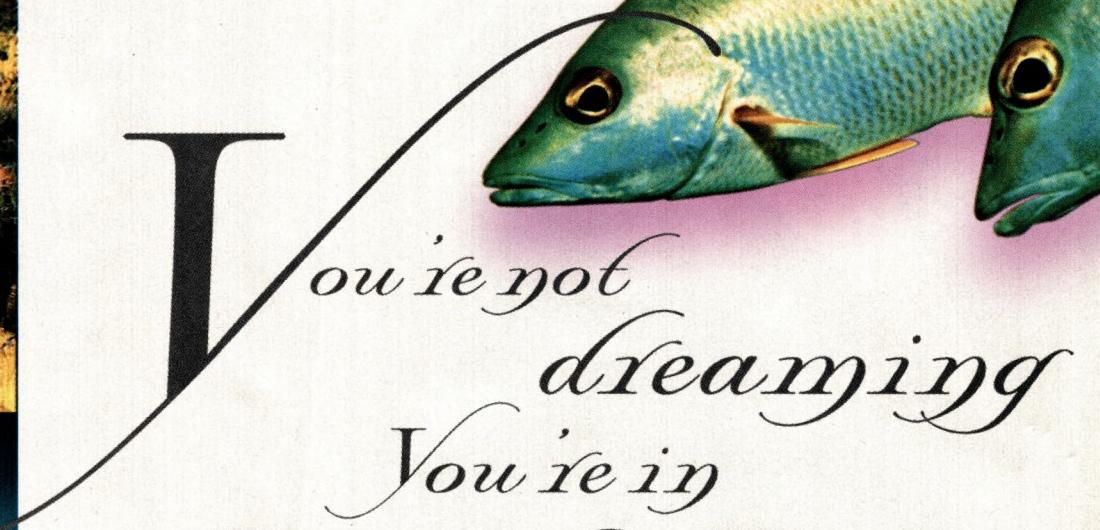
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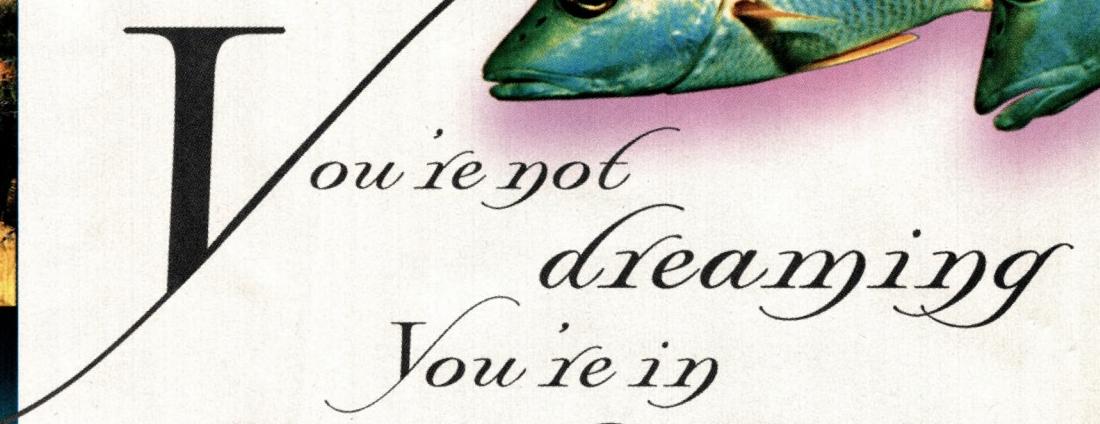


# You're not dreaming You're in *Puerto Rico*

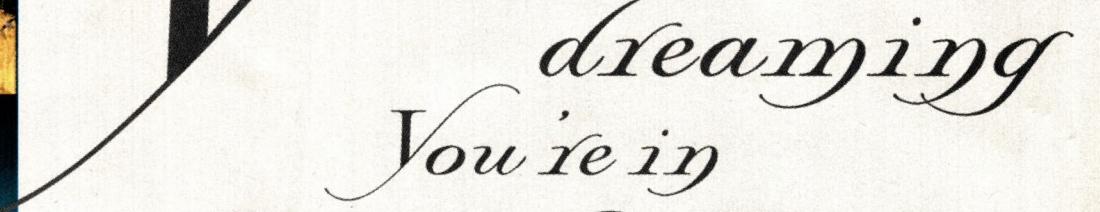
PLUNGE INTO A PANORAMA OF EXOTIC



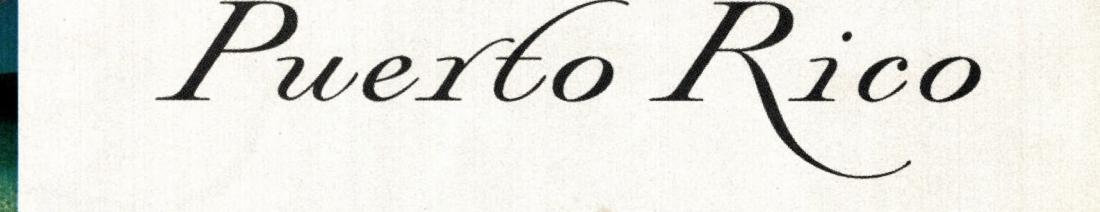
UNDERWATER ENCHANTMENTS:



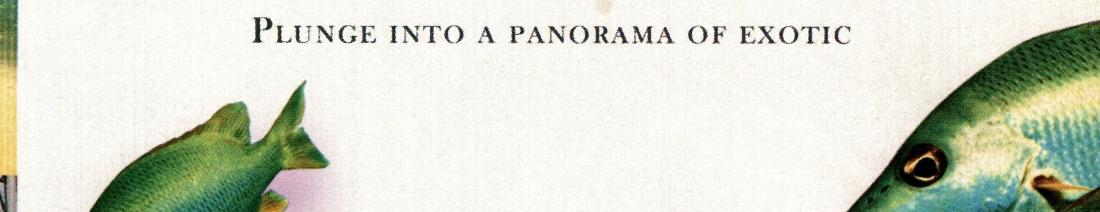
SWIM AMONG SCHOOLS OF ANGELFISH,



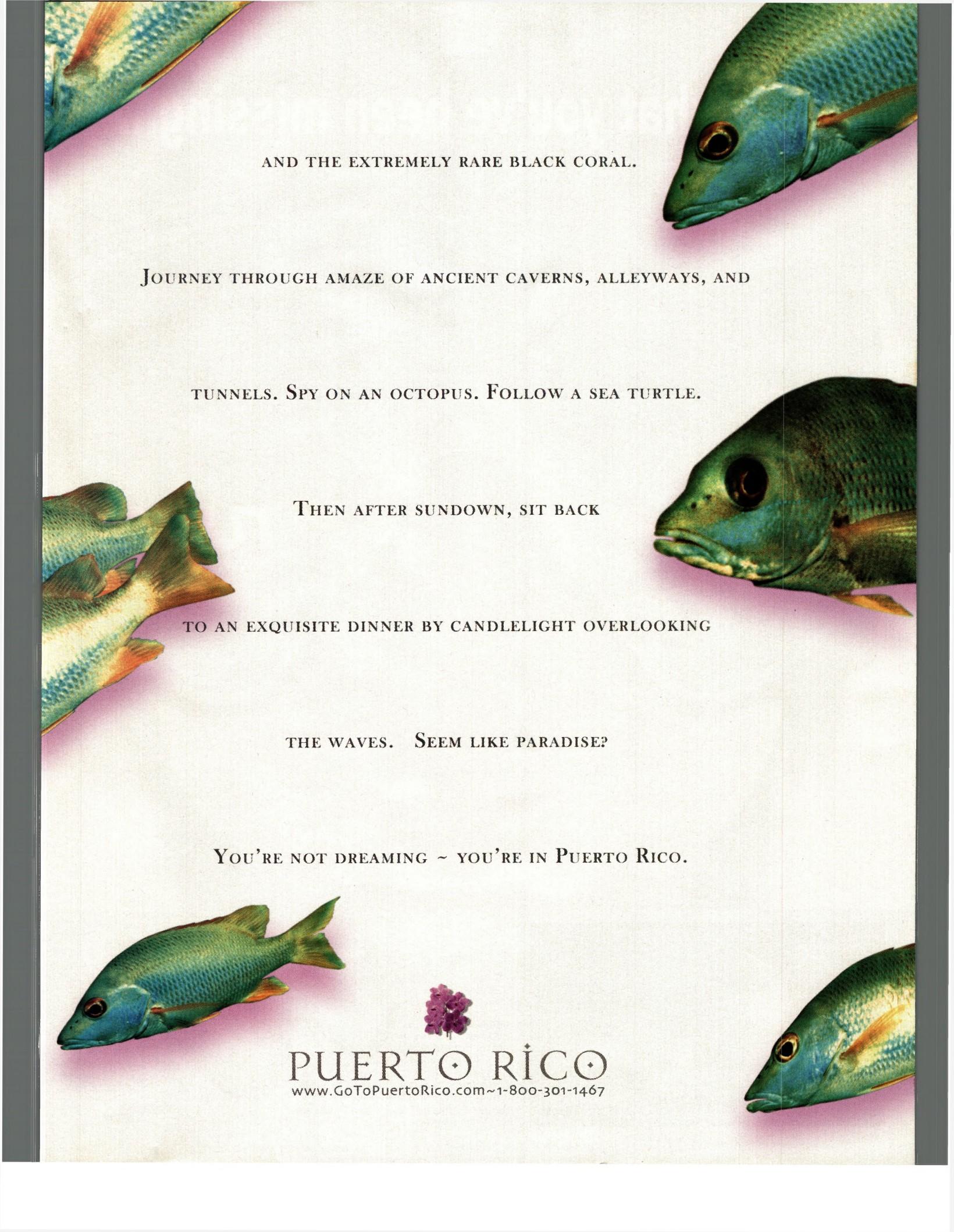
TRACK THE HUNDRED-FOOT DROP OF A MASSIVE WALL,



EXPLORE IMMENSE GARDENS OF STAGHORN,



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AND THE EXTREMELY RARE BLACK CORAL.

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THEN AFTER SUNDOWN, SIT BACK

TO AN EXQUISITE DINNER BY CANDLELIGHT OVERLOOKING

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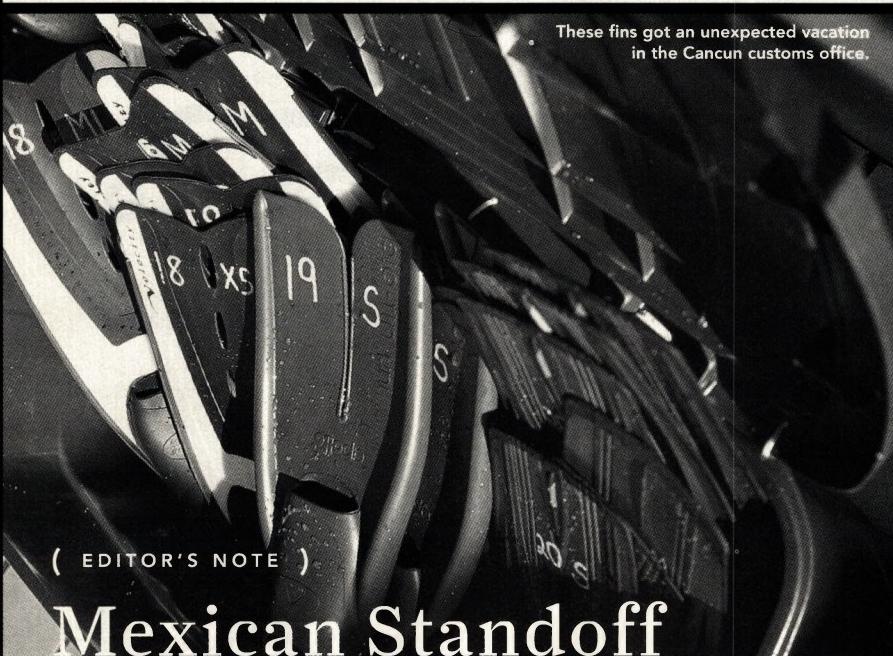
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# TALK



( EDITOR'S NOTE )

These fins got an unexpected vacation  
in the Cancun customs office.

## Mexican Standoff

How a handful of pencils almost derailed our fin tests. BY BUCK BUTLER

"**I T'S THE FREAKING PENCILS!**" ScubaLab Director John Brumm hissed through my phone. "They've got no problem with the fins, but I guess there's some kind of ban on importing pencils." John had already been on the phone to Mexico a dozen times, trying to figure out what was holding up the arrival of the equipment he would need to carry out this year's fin tests.

Of course, a few glitches are to be expected in a project that has as many ingredients as a Mexican feast. John first had to collect 116 pairs of fins and assemble a team of testers. He booked rooms, arranged meals and scheduled dives. He boxed up fins, speedometers, waterproof paper—and a handful of pencils—and shipped nine crates to Mexico.

When the crates arrived in Cancun, customs agents examined their contents. Fins, no problem. Test equipment, no problem. But the pencils were cause for concern. The shipment was held up for two weeks, and then finally released, arriving in Cozumel two days after the testers did. When John unpacked the box of test equipment, he was happy to find that the pencils had arrived safely.

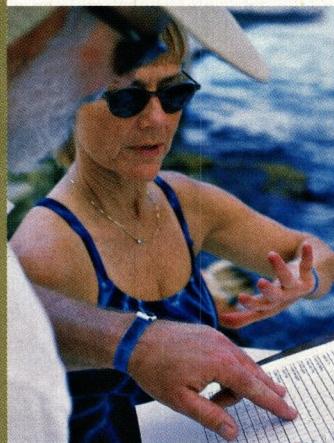


( CONTRIBUTOR )

**MICHAEL ANGE** In this month's advanced diving column, *Scuba Diving* Technical Editor Michael Ange walks us through the challenge of solo dive certification, where divers must calmly deal with simulated emergencies. It's all about improving safety, but Mike admits he enjoys ambushing his students. "That's the fun part of the job," he says. "You don't think I do this for T-shirts, do you?"

( ONLINE )

## What's New at scubadiving.com



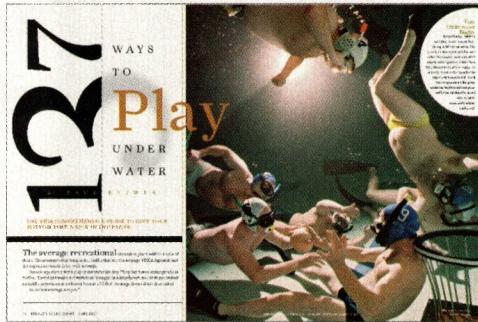
After you read the fin review in this issue, go to [www.scubadiving.com](http://www.scubadiving.com) to meet the team of divers who selflessly spent a week in Cozumel conducting fin tests for this review. You'll find that the group is made up of divers who put their fins on one foot at a time, just like you. Find out what their favorite local dive spots are, and you may find yourself gearing up beside one of them on your next dive. To read more about our test team, go to [www.scubadiving.com/meetthefintesters](http://www.scubadiving.com/meetthefintesters).

## ( LETTERS )

## More Ways to Play

**YOUR ARTICLE ENTITLED** "137 Ways to Play Under Water" (June '03) reads like a list of "137 Things I Never Want to Do Under Water." Play underwater rugby? Chug a root beer? Listen to the radio through a snorkel? If you like those, I've got a few more suggestions for you: Prepare your taxes under water. Get a root canal under water. Visit your mother-in-law under water.

I dive to escape these kinds of distractions. If I were to write an article about the best things to do under water, it would say: Blow bubbles. Experience weightlessness. Swim with fish. Get away from everything above water. **Randy Shuman, Grand Prairie, Texas**



### Piece of Cake

**ON PAGE 8** of your June issue there's a picture of a shapely woman in a wetsuit. On page 77, there's a young hottie in a bikini, tugging the pull string of a dive bag. And then on page 80, there's a picture of the same young lady suggestively holding a regulator just in front of her bee-stung lips. I've got no problem with cheesecake, guys, but how about a little beefcake to go with it?

On page 55, I finally found the answer to my prayers—a man in a Speedo! Unfortunately, he looks like the Pillsbury Dough Boy wearing a blue swim cap. Let me guess:

Most of your editors are men? **Lori Sylvester, Bethesda, Md.**

## ( HOW TO REACH US )

We want to know what's on your mind. Here are three easy ways to tell us:

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**MAIL:** Editor, Rodale's Scuba Diving, 6600 Abercorn St., Suite 208, Savannah, GA 31405

### Mistaken Identity

I WENT TO my local bookstore to pick up the latest issue of *Rodale's Scuba Diving* and couldn't find it there. I picked up another magazine and didn't discover until I got home that it was your magazine. Wow! I have always thought that your magazine offered the best information in diving, and now it's the best-looking, too. Congratulations on your great new look. **Brian Spilliards, via e-mail**

## ( THE NUMBERS )

**THE EUROPEAN INFLUENCE**

# 53%

Percentage of male divers who wear Speedo-style suits under their wetsuits.

**A DIP IN PAY**

# 66%

Percentage of divers who would accept less money at their jobs if it meant they could dive more.

**BACK TO SCHOOL**

# 18%

Percentage of divers who think a periodic recertification process should be required for divers.

**THE DARK SIDE**

# 39%

Percentage of divers who wear black fins.

(Source: Surveys of users on [www.scubadiving.com](http://www.scubadiving.com))

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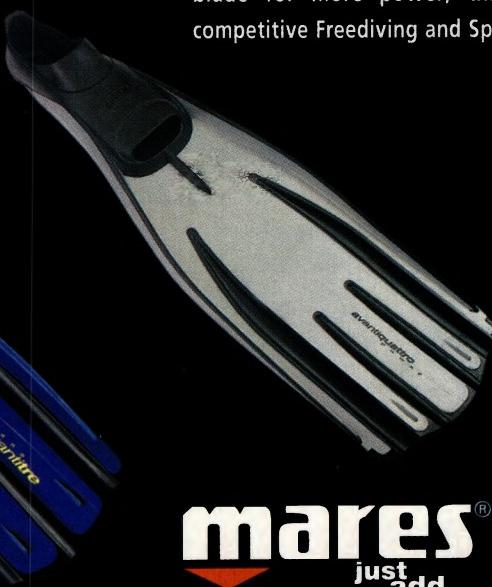


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# Dive Greatness

DIVE OF THE MONTH

**1 HIGH ISLAND 389, GULF OF MEXICO.** The steel supports of this natural gas rig off Freeport, Texas, are gift-wrapped in a psychedelic coat of invertebrate life. On every leg and crossbeam, garden patches of iridescent blue and brilliant red sponges are tended by hogfish, butterflyfish and puffers.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTY SNYDERMAN

JULY 2003 RODALE'S SCUBA DIVING 17

( TEXAS )

## High Island 389

**1** This massive natural gas rig, which rises 410 feet off the Gulf of Mexico seafloor just inside the boundary of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, is the pride of Texas diving—and for good reason. Originally owned by Mobil Oil and installed nearly 20 years ago, 389 sports dense concentrations of invertebrates that coat the structure in eye-popping colors. Amberjacks, barracudas and horse-eye jacks throng the open space inside the steel latticework. Make sure you look out to the blue, though, because this dive is more than just pretty colors. The maze of steel braces is a magnet for feisty silky sharks, which show up in groups of 50 or more. While you're safely inside 389's gigantic cage, the sleek, fast sharks cruise outside, on the prowl for tuna. Keep your camera handy to capture all the action, and make sure you have the skills to dive in unpredictable current.

( PALAU )

## Ulong Channel

**2** Each morning in Palau, when most boats are scrambling from resorts in Koror to be first to arrive at world-famous Blue Corner 45 minutes away, a handful of small boats are smartly making a beeline for quieter (and closer) Ulong Channel. This site is actually three dives in one—wall, shark and drift—and encapsulates all that's cool about Palau. On a good day, the big animal action here rivals that of more popular sites. Latch onto the reef at the lip of the wall with a reef hook and watch whitetip reef sharks, snappers, trevally and rays cruise the incoming tide while you give your fins a break. When you get bored with the show, untether yourself and catch the drift into the channel, which is coated in hard and soft corals, sea fans and rolling meadows of cabbage and plate coral tended by clouds of squirrelfish, soldierfish and glasseyes. Relax, and enjoy the technicolor ride.



**2** A cloud of soldierfish seem to defy the swift current that washes Palau's Ulong Channel and propels divers over an ever-changing reefscape.



( CALIFORNIA )

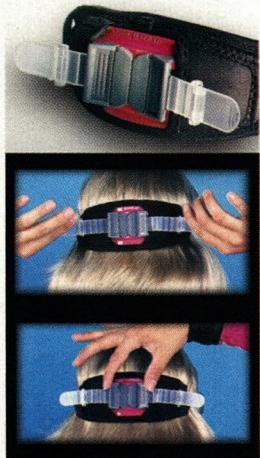
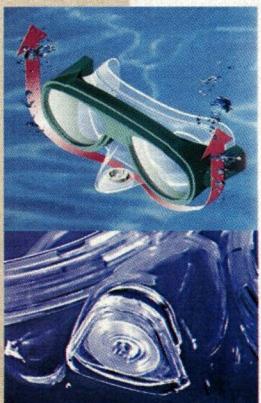
## Cathedral Cove

3 There's a reason East Anacapa is seldom dived: Northwesterly winds can make anchoring hazardous here, so dive operators look for calmer sites in the Channel Islands National Park. When the dive boat captain can find a safe mooring, this is spectacular diving. A small series of wash rocks gives way to miniature walls, canyons and ledges packed with life. Sea fans grace the rocky substrate, and the floor of the kelp forest is carpeted with purple and red algae, red and white anemones, Spanish shawl nudibranchs, spiny sea urchins and feathery orange gorgonians. To top it off, the rock-lined anchorage at Cathedral Cove is a favorite haul-out for sea lions, who often plunge into the water to play with divers. SD



3 Purple sea urchins blanket the sea bottom off the trio of islands that make up Anacapa.

GET THERE > For information on the operators who can get you to these sites, turn to *In Depth* on page 96, section 1.



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Call 1-800-841-7007 for further information. Ocean Master now builds back-inflatable buoyancy compensators and twin piston regulators. Visit your local Ocean Master dealer to see also the fine collection of dry snorkels, fins and custom-formulated beta titanium knives.



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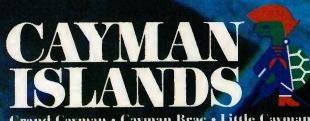
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# Curre



Sculptor Kemal Tufan describes the work as "a resistance against the wild system in the world. We just see a shark."



# n t s



PHOTOGRAPH BY ALI KABAS

( ART )

## Hammer Time

Putting the "underwater" in underwater sculpture.

When Turkish artist Kemal Tufan decided to craft an underwater sculpture, he took the concept of "underwater" to heart. Rather than chisel this nine-foot shark in a traditional studio, Tufan sank a 3,700-pound block of marble in the Mediterranean off Kas, Turkey, and plunged in, chisel and hammer in hand.

"The process was the most important part. It was a performance," says Tufan. "That's why I moved my studio under water."

Working into the night for a total of 13 days, Tufan finished what may be the only underwater sculpture actually sculpted under water. The effort required 2,525 minutes of bottom time and 46 tanks of air. "Sometimes I was changing the tanks under water to work nonstop," he says.

You'll find the shark in just 26 feet of water off Güvercin Island, a popular dive site 20 minutes from the Kas harbor. "It was very hard to work under water, but it was part of the project," says Tufan. "The darkness just made things more exciting."

( STAT )

78%

Proportion of adults who support designating more coral reefs "protected areas." Only 10 percent opposed the idea.  
*Source: Survey of 1,000 American adults conducted for the Coral Reef Foundation.*

## ( NEW TOY )

**PLAY THAT FUNKY MUSIC, DIVE BOY**

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Imagine diving Truk Lagoon accompanied by Bach's "Toccata & Fugue in D Minor." Or drift diving Palancar with the Rolling Stones' "Gimme Shelter." Or, if you just dig paranoia, how about the soundtrack to *Jaws*?

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**Price:** \$399. **Contact:** Diver Entertainment Systems, (760) 591-7811, web: [www.desdiver.com](http://www.desdiver.com) —JOHN BRUMM



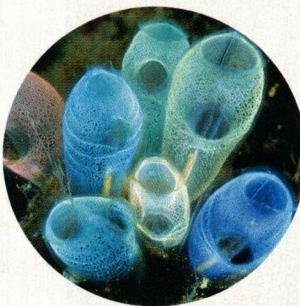
You'll be jammin' with the Aquadio4.

## ( JUST IN )

**Sunken Treasure**

This tunicate could save your life.

ET-743 is not a particularly catchy name, but it could become a joyous household word. Derived from tunicates, the drug has been found to slow or halt the progression of advanced sarcomas—malignant tumors that grow in muscles, bones and fatty tissues. Researchers are currently testing the drug on patients with advanced breast, colon, ovarian and lung cancer. —KEN MCALPINE



## ( QUOTE )

“Not bad for something put together over cocktails.”

—JIMMY ATKINSON, FOUNDER OF “TOYS FOR CHILDREN,” ON THE 7,400 CHRISTMAS GIFTS DISTRIBUTED BY DIVERS TO NEEDY KIDS IN HONDURAS, COSTA RICA AND THE TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS.

JOSEPH BYRD (TOP), NORBERT WU/NORBERT WU PRODUCTIONS (BOTTOM)

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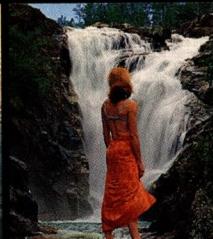


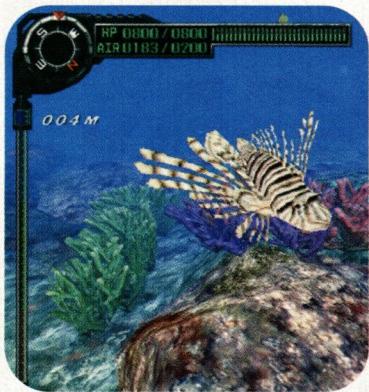
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( MEDIA )

## Game On

Grab your controller and dive.

Tap your dive experience and show Junior who's boss in the PlayStation 2 game "Everblue 2." The objective: Guide a digital diver in the hunt for killer underwater photos and sunken treasure. At the advanced levels, he'll be chum in the face of sharks, deadly currents and dangerous wreck penetrations. **Price:** \$39.99. **Contact:** [www.capcom.com](http://www.capcom.com). —JUSTIN HALL

( VOLUNTEER )

**Counting Fins** Sign up for the 2003 Great Annual Fish Count and you'll have an ironclad excuse to knock off for a few days and go diving. Every July, the Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) hosts free fish ID seminars, then organizes survey dives to count the diversity and abundance of fish on reefs in the U.S., Canada (British Columbia), Mexico (Gulf of California) and throughout the Caribbean. For a complete listing of events, visit [www.fishcount.org](http://www.fishcount.org).

( JUST IN )

## You Sexy Thing

Suck your gut in a little tighter next time you slip into a wetsuit. A survey of 2,200 singles on Match.com rates scuba as the second "sexiest vacation activity." Beach volleyball was number one. Water skiing was number three. Based on the survey, the online dating site is now organizing scuba-themed events, says Kathleen Roldan, director of dating. —SCOTT D. JONES

( PROTECTION )

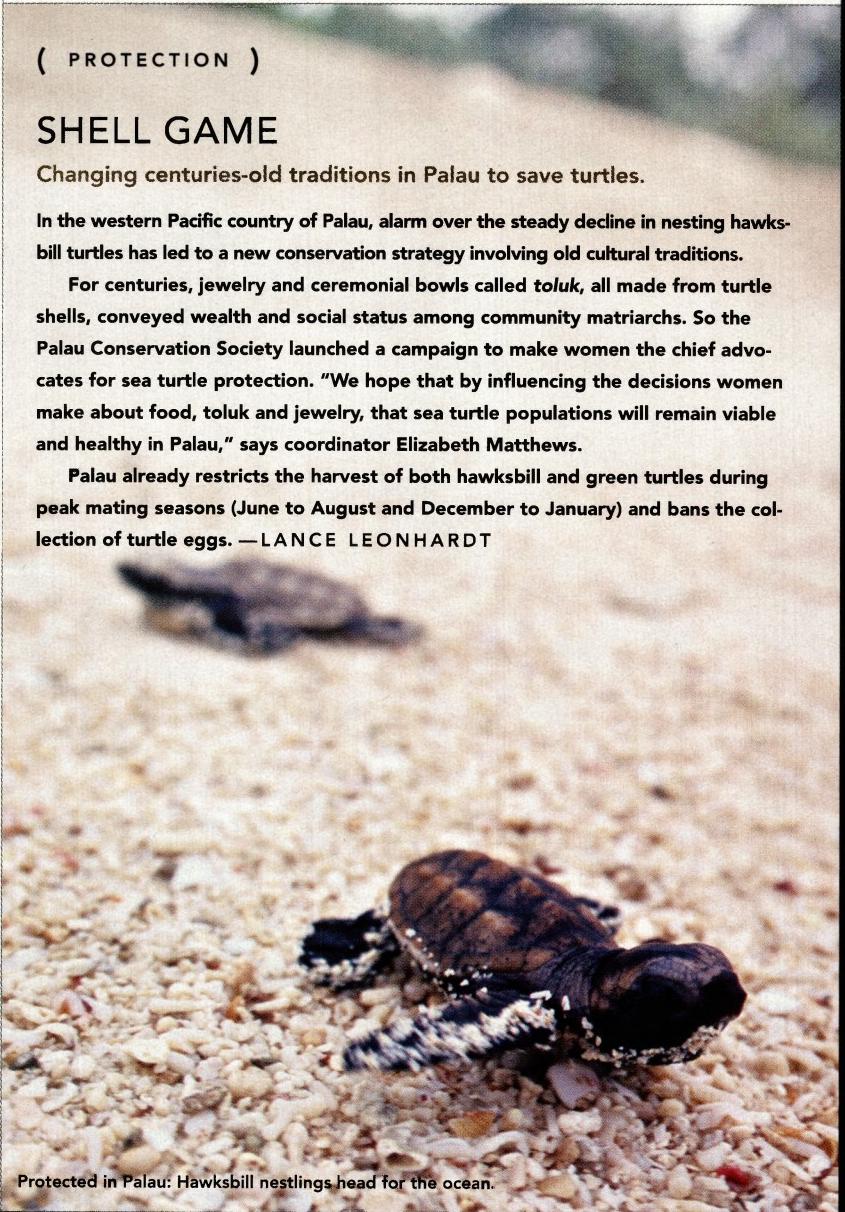
## SHELL GAME

Changing centuries-old traditions in Palau to save turtles.

In the western Pacific country of Palau, alarm over the steady decline in nesting hawksbill turtles has led to a new conservation strategy involving old cultural traditions.

For centuries, jewelry and ceremonial bowls called *toluk*, all made from turtle shells, conveyed wealth and social status among community matriarchs. So the Palau Conservation Society launched a campaign to make women the chief advocates for sea turtle protection. "We hope that by influencing the decisions women make about food, *toluk* and jewelry, that sea turtle populations will remain viable and healthy in Palau," says coordinator Elizabeth Matthews.

Palau already restricts the harvest of both hawksbill and green turtles during peak mating seasons (June to August and December to January) and bans the collection of turtle eggs. —LANCE LEONHARDT



Protected in Palau: Hawksbill nestlings head for the ocean.

DOUG PERINNE/SEAPICS.COM (BOTTOM)



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## L I F E

( FISH ID )

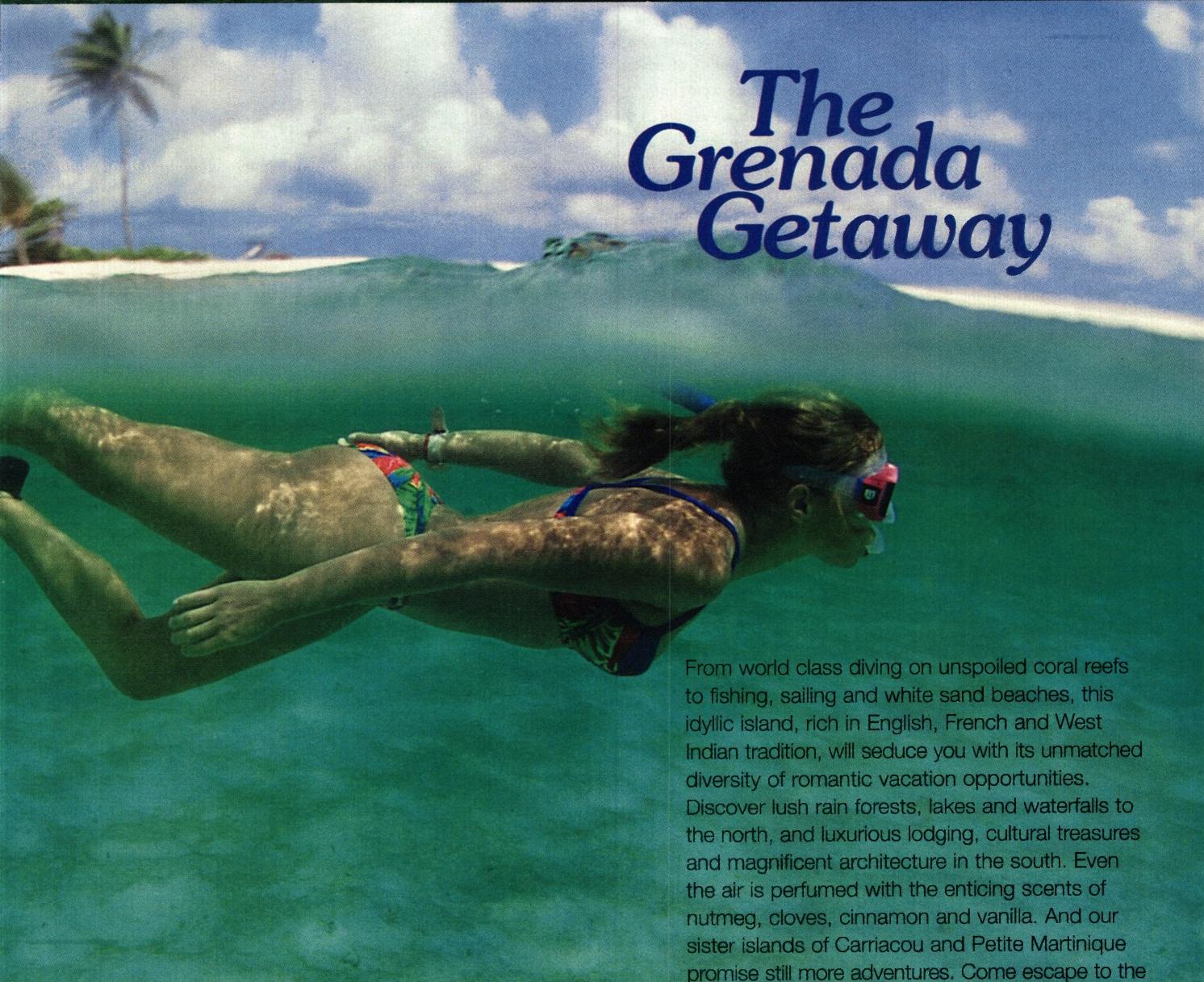
**What's This?** The clue to this fish's common name is as plain as the fleshy growths on its face. Some people think the large one looks like a native American headdress.

Linguine-spined, this fish curls its eel-like body inside sponges and reef crevices, where it uses mottled brown to yellow coloring to blend in. You'll find it at depths from five feet to 300 feet throughout a range that includes northern California and the Bering Sea. **SD**

*t h e A N S W E R*Decorated warbonnet (*Chirolophis decoratus*).



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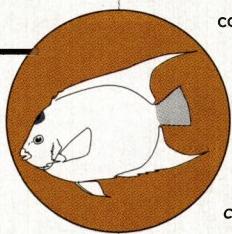
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# the DIFFERENCE

**How to tell two species apart.** This month: Two heavenly angels.

Of all the fish in the sea, few are as striking as the queen angelfish, *Holacanthus ciliaris*. The pie-sized beauty is a common resident of tropical eastern Atlantic reefs from Bermuda to Brazil, including those in Florida, the Caribbean and the Bahamas. But divers exploring the reefs of



Bermuda, Florida and the eastern Bahamas are sometimes confused when they encounter a second angelfish of similar size, color and shape known as the blue angelfish, *Holacanthus bermudensis*.

When you compare similar-looking species such as the queen angelfish and the blue angelfish in field guides, it's easy enough to note marked differences. But when you're under

QUEEN ANGELFISH



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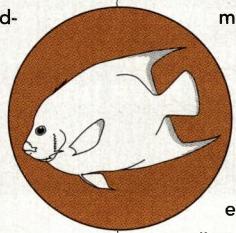
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water, it's easy to forget the subtle distinctions between species. That's why savvy fish-watchers often use memory cues to help remember fish names and lessen confusion between similar species. These memorable tidbits of information link a species' common name to its most distinctive feature.

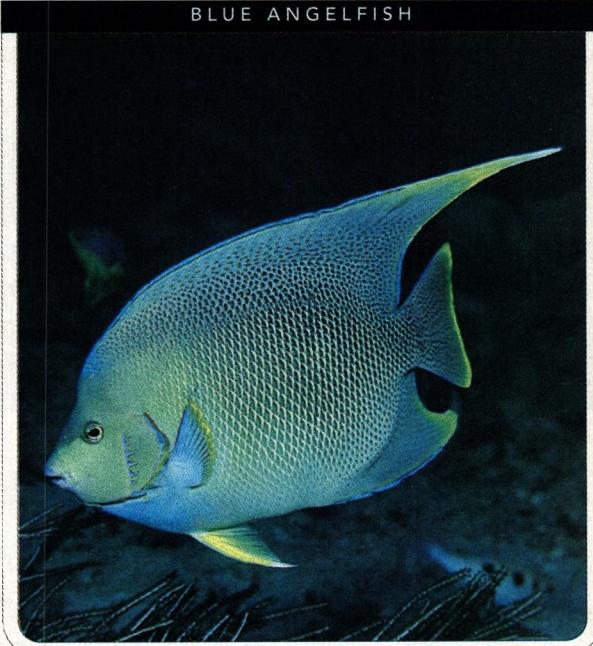
For example, a quick glance at the queen angelfish reveals a dark blue spot speckled and ringed with neon blue on its forehead. You won't find this feature on the blue angelfish. Think of this unique feature as



the queen's crown, and voilà, the correct identification of the queen angelfish will be yours for life. The blue angelfish's memory cue is even easier to remember because the species' common name bears its most distinctive feature—an almost completely blue body and fins. Simple enough, right? Now all you have to do is commit to memory nearly 400 more fish names and you'll be ready for your next Caribbean dive vacation. **SD**

—PAUL HUMANN  
AND NED DELOACH

BLUE ANGELFISH



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We encourage divers everywhere to look for the "Testers' Choice" icon when making equipment purchases. Ask your local dive shop for "Testers' Choice" products. Let them know you want the best.

Travel Guide



TRAVEL GUIDE

## From Ambergris to Nowhere

Ambergris Caye is the kind of time-free place where you might spend an hour staring at a lizard.

A father and daughter find all the world they need on Belize's most popular caye. **BY JAY HEINRICH**

### MY DAUGHTER

My daughter and I are having an argument. All the signs in the universe are telling us to snorkel, but Dorothy wants to study. It's two hours before our next dive, we're sitting in comfortable chaises on a tropical beach, and I'm watching the surf break on the hemisphere's second longest reef, just a quarter mile away. From the corner of

my eye, I can see the resort's sit-on-top kayaks. They seem to beckon.

I'm a reasonable man.

"I'll give you a choice," I say. "Snorkel, or close your eyes and relax."

"No," she says mildly, shifting an impossibly thick study guide for an advanced placement exam in environmental science. Dorothy, who starts college in the fall, apparently doesn't see the irony in immersing herself in a book on the environment while generous numbers of barracuda and stingrays swim by, almost literally under our noses.

My parental authority is being chal-

lenged here, but Dorothy has the moral upper hand. It's our third day on Belize's Ambergris Caye, and we've taken full advantage of one of the most compact places for a vacation. Although we haven't left our pretty little resort, Journey's End, we've done more things than you could do within an hour's drive of most places:

> Dorothy has made her referral dives through the operation located on the premises of the resort, and proudly earned her certification. One of them was in Mata Cut, where we swam through dramatic coral formations swarming with sergeant majors.

> I've had a healthy number of Belikins,

Belize's beer, plus a few piña coladas spiked with One Barrel, Belize's excellent rum.

> Dorothy has stood on the roof of the staff buildings and watched crocodiles in the lagoon behind the resort.

> I have canoed solo for five miles through that same lagoon, which swarmed with bonefish. Fishermen should be clamoring to get to this place, but I didn't see a soul.

> We have raced through four novels between the two of us.

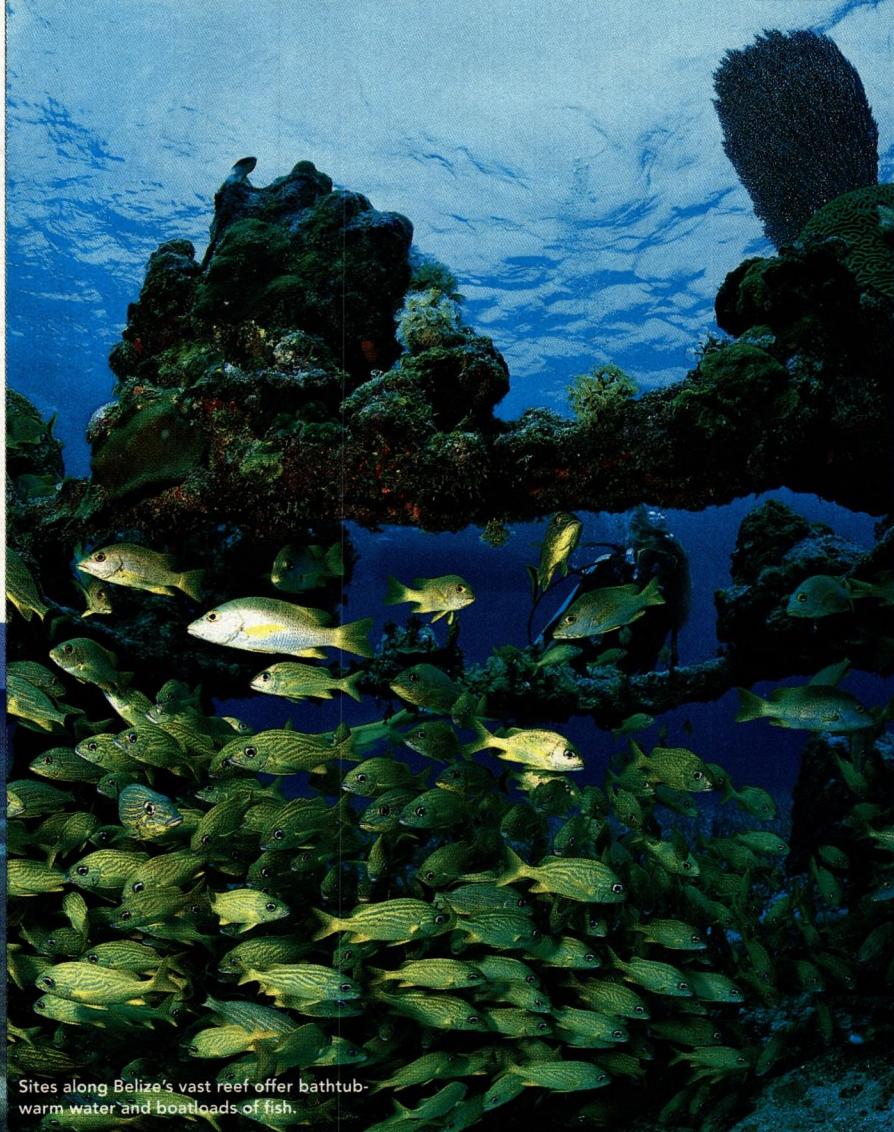
> We have dived in Hol Chan Marine Reserve, home of the popular and aptly named Shark-Ray Alley, at night, during the full moon, in muscular current.



> We have walked for some miles along a mostly undeveloped beach, seeing many signs offering cheap real estate.

> We have sat for an hour and a half at a dining table on the edge of a deck over the beach, smearing huevos rancheros on our plates to attract flies for the lizard hunt. (People will tell you that Ambergris is the kind of time-free place where type-A people find themselves staring for more than an hour at a lizard. It's entirely true.)

> And we have already kayaked out to the reef, tied to a mooring, and snorkeled among stingrays and spiny lobsters and eels. The coral here almost breaks the



Sites along Belize's vast reef offer bathtub-warm water and boatloads of fish.

## BEYOND AMBERGRIS: BELIZE'S ATOLLS

Three large atolls—Turneffe, Lighthouse and Gloves—are three of the only four atolls in the entire western hemisphere and loom 30 to 60 miles off Belize's eastern horizon. They are completely devoid of urban development and are the stuff that "no phones, no lights, no motorcars" dreams are made of. If you want to sample their pleasures, you've got three choices: spend a week on a live-aboard (the *Belize Aggressor III*, Peter Hughes' *Sun Dancer II* and *Nekton Pilot*, which transfers here in winter from the Bahamas), stay in one of the atoll-based resorts (Blackbird Caye, Turneffe Flats, Turneffe Island Lodge and others) or visit with a land-based operator from the mainland (several in Ambergris, in the northern cayes and the southern resorts make the journey) on an all-day trip.

**DIVE OPPORTUNITIES:** Some of the Caribbean's wildest dives happen here, at sites like The Elbow—reminiscent of pelagic-heavy Pacific sites—a drop-off where currents, schools of jacks and divers all come together. The 412-foot-deep Blue Hole is cool (especially since operators started chumming it for sharks), but don't miss nearby Half Moon Caye, where the walls are riddled with tunnels and swim-throughs, and barrel sponges and grouper are fat and happy. Southernmost Gloves Reef gets the fewest divers but hoards the riches, more than 50 miles of coral reefs and walls.

**DON'T-MISS FAMILY OUTING:** This is flyfishing heaven—cast for bonefish, permit and tarpon in the shallows. If you don't fish, you can kayak the mangrove channels instead.



While diving Lighthouse Reef you may get to say hello to Honey, a social bottlenose dolphin.

water's surface, and we snorkeled carefully through the mazes.

And that was in just three days, without leaving the resort. Dorothy should have been studying for her exam already, but I have talked her out of it each time she tries. OK, I'm a terrible influence on her. So, I let her study and walk off to chat with the bar-

tender in the large, shady outdoor bar.

You meet a great mix of people on Ambergris. Belize touts itself as the only English-speaking country in Central America, and it seems as though every native speaks it. But Spanish is their first language, and the food has a deep Mexican influence. Many of the guests we meet are

## BEYOND AMBERGRIS: SOUTHERN BELIZE

For decades, most divers arriving in Belize would immediately depart Belize City for Ambergris and points north. Lately, many are heading south, to resorts near the towns of Dangriga, Hopkins, Stann Creek and Placencia. Though farther from the barrier reef—about an hour-long boat ride, in most cases—the resorts in southern Belize have the reef to themselves, and you've got about as good a chance of seeing a whale shark as you do another resort's dive boat.

**DIVE OPPORTUNITIES:** Laughing Bird Caye is a relatively popular lunch and snorkel spot for day-trippers, but you'll be one of the few divers on its colorful and sublime faro reef system at sites like Brian's Drop-off and Lobster Gardens. Seal Caye and Hunting Caye are among the sites in the Sapodilla Cayses, 25 miles east of Punta Gorda in the extreme south, where divers are rare, and big marlin, wahoo, tuna and grouper are common.

**DON'T-MISS FAMILY OUTING:** Put on your pith helmet—the Cockscomb Wildlife Sanctuary just west of Hopkins is the world's only jaguar preserve.

Americans, but a good third are from other Latin American countries, especially Guatemala and Mexico. There is no better place on earth than a bar in Belize to attempt to revive three years of dormant high school Spanish. Intending to order a virgin piña colada, I somehow end up with a fruit drink aggressively spiked with rum. The bartender looks hurt when I leave without touching it and run to the dock. Dorothy is there already. This time Steve, the shop's divemaster, is taking us to Tackle Box Canyons.

Steve looks everything you would hope for in a modern-day pirate: raggedy cutoff Boston Red Sox shirt, enormous earrings, and a mouth full of gold teeth that glitter when he smiles, which is often. His outfit seems to be the island's standard pre-dive attire. Nearly everyone we meet, from the waiters to the water taxi drivers, are divers, and, unless they are in uniform, they make an honest attempt to dress down.

The Journey's End divemasters like to use sardines as chum, and Steve takes a

generous amount for our dive, attracting even more sergeant majors than we've seen before. He leads us down through deep reef canyons, where we peer into crevices for lobsters and eels. Dorothy practices swimming upside down. I never knew that someone could smile so widely through a regulator. "Isn't diving relaxin'?" Steve says when we're back on the boat.

Having behaved virtuously on our third day, Dorothy is ready to move on our fourth day. She wants to catch the action in San Pedro. The action, as it turns out, isn't in town. "You like to go fast?" asks the captain of the little water taxi that meets us at the Journey's End dock.

Well, sure.

He yanks the stick back and we roar down the coast, getting soaked, watching the blur of the coast, tearing by the thatched huts of one of the resorts where "Temptation Island" was filmed, and get-

ting deposited at San Pedro, where lazy barracudas take the shade.

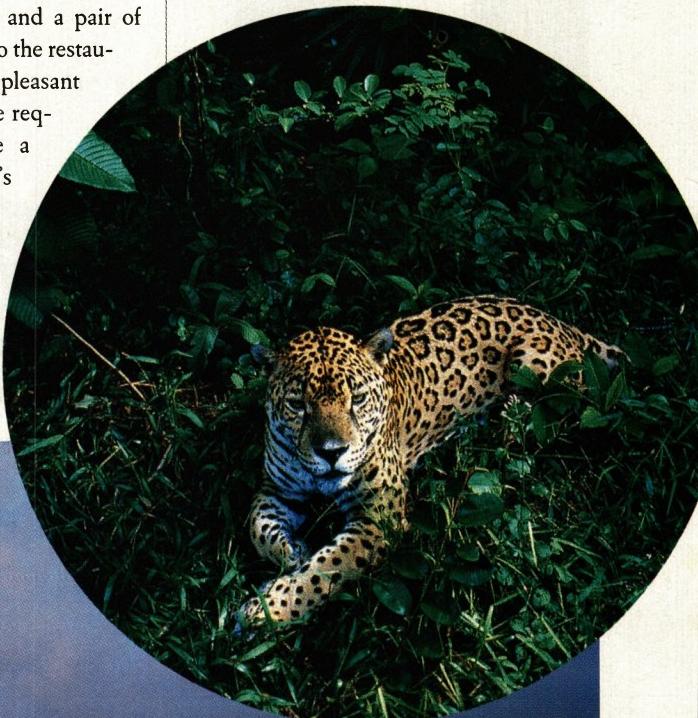
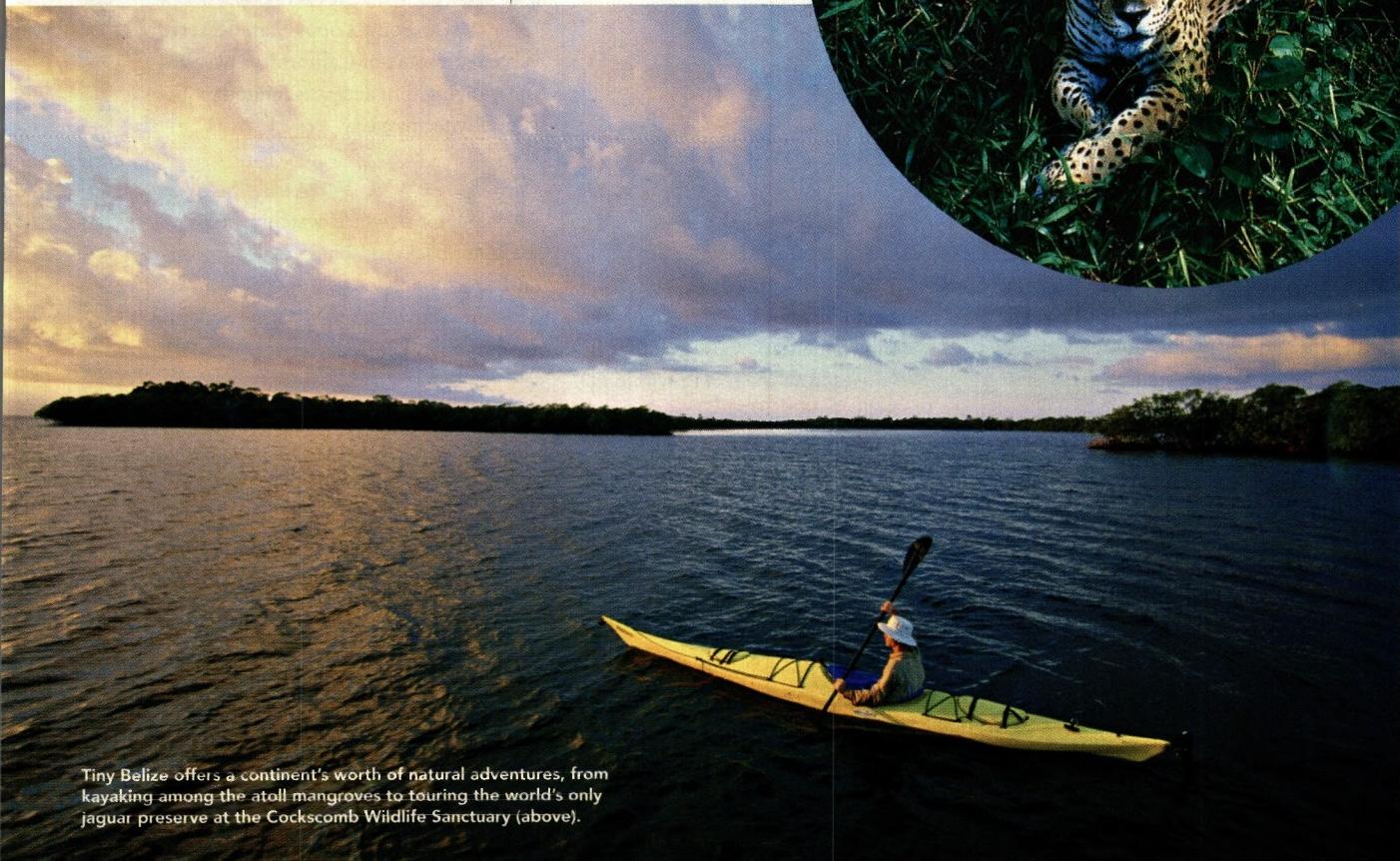
The barracudas have the local vibe down pat. There's a certain bustle to the town—the three dirt streets are crowded with electric carts, the island's favored form of land transport—but you wouldn't go to Ambergris for the nightlife. We have lunch at Fido's ("Pronounced Feedo's," the waiters' T-shirts say), an open-air restaurant with a giant thatched roof and a pair of Belizean folk singers. Next to the restaurant is an art shop run by a pleasant Englishwoman. We buy the requisite souvenirs, and take a water taxi back to Journey's End. We've had enough to do without going anywhere else.

More than enough: We don't get the chance to dive Blue Hole,

Belize's most famous dive. Nor do we visit the Mayan ruins at Altun Ha, or tube through a cave on the mainland. As we board a little Tropic Air for the 15-minute flight back to Belize City after five days at Journey's End, it occurs to me that I can't account for all the time we have wasted.

Which, come to think of it, makes it the perfect vacation. SD

GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM); NORBERT WU/NORBERT WU PRODUCTIONS (RIGHT)



# 10 Things TO DO IN ( MONTEREY, CALIF. )

**1 DIVE OCEAN PINNACLES.** These twin spires in Carmel Bay are two of the best boat dives in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Covered in lush kelp and thick invertebrate life, the shoreward pinnacle rises from 100 feet to within 15 feet of the surface. The seaward pinnacle plateaus raggedly 45 to 70 feet below the surface, and then drops sharply to more than 120 feet. You may see a whale or two as they pass by on their annual journey to Mexico.

**2 VISIT THE MONASTERY.** It's a short walk from Hwy. 1 in Carmel to great shore diving off Monastery Beach. The south side has a calm patch reef. The north side allows you access to Monterey Submarine Canyon.

**3 GO DIGITAL.** Three local companies—Optiquatics, Backscatter

and Light & Motion—offer two-day digital photo workshops from the Monterey Breakwater beach.

**4 DIVE DRY.** Explore the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Among the highlights: a living kelp forest exhibit and a one-million-gallon tank that is home to sharks, tuna and turtles.

**5 WALK THE STREET.** Cannery Row, one of America's most famous streets, has shops, restaurants, late-night music and a microbrewery.

**6 TAKE THE GRAND TOUR.** 17-Mile Drive is a dramatic stretch of road where you'll see basking seals and enormous stands of redwoods.

**7 GET SOME SOLE.** At funky Monterey's Fish House, you can order locally caught petrale sole grilled or sautéed.

**8 DIVE PEBBLE BEACH.** The unforgiving sixth hole of the famous golf course runs along the banks of Stillwater Cove, which is also a decent place to dive. The shallow cove offers calm water, healthy kelp and the occasional golf ball souvenir.

**9 MAKE RESERVATIONS FOR TWO.** Point Lobos State Reserve is home to some of California's sweetest shore diving, but access is limited to just 15 buddy teams a day.

**10 SPY A WHALE.** Sign up for a whale-watching tour to see humpback and blue whales feeding on large schools of fish and krill in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary year-round. **SD**



**GET THERE** > For more information on Monterey, turn to In Depth, page 98, section 3.

The race is on: A dive boat heads for Cozumel's reefs.



## Cozumel's Best

Scores are in on the operators and resorts in Mexico's dive capital.

**CLOSE, INEXPENSIVE AND EASY** Caribbean drift diving—is it any wonder why Cozumel is the most visited destination in diving year after year? The crown jewel of Mexico's dive destinations offers a proliferation of dive shops large and small and accommodations to suit any taste and budget.

### DIVE OPERATORS

#### Aqua Safari

TEL: (011) 52-987-87-20101

WEB: [www.aquasafari.com](http://www.aquasafari.com)

90.5 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said

they would dive with this operator again.

**READERS SAY:** S.S., Tampa, Fla.: "A great team. We took the fast boat and were the only ones out there." March '03. M.W., Bryan, Texas: "Small boat with shaded cabin, drinking water and small snack provided... Shop was well-equipped, provided storage space for gear and had an efficient staff." Jan. '03.

### ( SCORES )

Overall A. Staff A+.

Boats & Facilities A. Value A+.

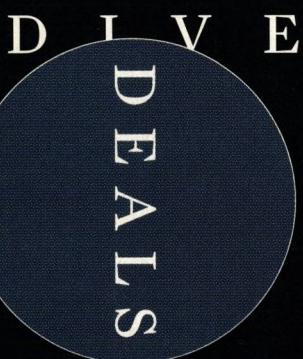
## Del Mar Aquatics

TEL: (011) 52-987-87-21900

WEB: [www.delmaraquatics.net](http://www.delmaraquatics.net)

100 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

**READERS SAY:** G.S., Isanti, Minn.: "The staff and instructors were fun, patient and knowledgeable. The whole experience was a total pleasure." Jan. '03. L.P., Laguna Niguel, Calif.:



### GRAND CAYMAN, EAST END Cayman Diving Lodge

**1 THE DEAL:** Take your kids aged 12 to 17 and Cayman Diving Lodge will do their check-out dives or full certifications for free. Offer is valid through Sept. 5, one child per certified diving parent or

guardian on full package; kids stay at nondiver rate. Certain restrictions and exclusions apply: PADI materials are not included and this special cannot be combined with any other discounts (see the web site for information on the 10 percent discount on current summer and fall packages). (tel

800-852-3483, e-mail [info@divecd.com](mailto:info@divecd.com), web [divelodge.com](http://divelodge.com))

### COZUMEL, MEXICO

#### Condumel

**2 THE DEAL:** Condumel offers condominium-style lodging on the beach just two miles north of San Miguel. Each

(continued on p. 42)

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## READER RATINGS

"I would use them again. They have fast boats and are a good value, although that value means crowded, at times."

Nov. '02.

( SCORES )

Overall B+. Staff A.

Boats & Facilities B. Value B-.

## Dive Palancar

TEL: (011) 52-987-87-29770

WEB: [www.divepalancarcozumel.com](http://www.divepalancarcozumel.com)

93.1 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

READERS SAY: S.L., Carson City, Nev.:

"I liked the short boat rides—3 to 10 minutes for most locations." Dec. '02.

N.S., Lisbon, Ohio: "Our divemasters were the best. They were very aware of their groups and the safety of all concerned. At the same time, the divemasters made sure we all had a wonderful time." Feb. '03.

( SCORES )

Overall A-. Staff A.

Boats & Facilities B+. Value B+.

84.6 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

READERS SAY: B.E., Waterloo, Ontario: "The operator paid close attention to the preservation of reefs."

Feb. '03. R.G., South Deerfield, Mass.:

"They let me and my dive buddy do extended bottom times because they were familiar with us." March '03.

( SCORES )

Overall B+. Staff A-.

Boats and Facilities B-. Value B+.

## Dive With Martin

TEL: (800) 897-5553, (011) 52-987-87-22610

WEB: [www.divewithmartin.com](http://www.divewithmartin.com)

95 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

READERS SAY: O.B., Green Oaks, Ill.:

"Great service. Boats are just the right size to be able to offer individual attention to small parties." Dec. '02. L.C., Madison, Wis.: "First, before we even got there, the e-mail enthusiasm was abundant. We got a quick confirmation from their web site. Once on the island, the shop came and picked us up at our pier." Feb. '03.

( SCORES )

Overall A. Staff A+.

Boats & Facilities A-. Value A+.

## Dive Paradise

TEL: (800) 308-5125, (011) 52-987-87-21007

WEB: [www.diveparadise.com](http://www.diveparadise.com)

## DIVE DEALS

(continued from p. 41)

mini-suite includes a complete kitchen, bedroom, sitting area, hammock, full bath, air-conditioning, ceiling fans and balcony overlooking the Caribbean. Daily maid service provided. RATES: 3 nights, 2 days boat diving, \$273/diver, \$163/nondiver; 4 nights, 3 days boat diving, \$382/diver, \$217/nondiver; 5 nights, 4 days boat diving, \$492/diver, \$272/nondiver; 6 nights, 5 days boat diving, \$601/diver, \$326/nondiver; 7 nights, 6 days boat diving, \$710/diver, \$380/nondiver. With a 7-night stay or more, Island Dreams will stock your kitchen with one case of soda, one case of beer and one liter of local rum, free. Mention Rodale's Scuba Diving and take \$30 off the airfare to Cozumel, per person. Offer valid

(continued on p. 44)

## Sand Dollar Sports

TEL: (888) 737-6399, (011) 52-987-87-26157

WEB: [www.sanddollarsports.com](http://www.sanddollarsports.com)

93.8 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

**READERS SAY:** D.C., Herndon, Va.: "These guys were very good at going through the pre-dive instructions and discussions. They split our group into two groups of six divers and they had a divemaster with each group." Nov. '02. R.A., Austin, Texas: "Our divemaster was first-rate. My only complaint is the long walk from the dive shop to the boat." Nov. '02.

( SCORES )

Overall A. Staff A.

Boats & Facilities B. Value B+.

## Scuba-Du

TEL: (011) 52-987-87-29505

WEB: [www.scubadu.com](http://www.scubadu.com)

81.5 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

**READERS SAY:** J.S., Raleigh, N.C.: "The staff cared about customer satisfaction and made sure I was comfortable with the equipment before I took my first dive." Feb. '03. T.T., St. Paul, Minn.: "Awesome operator. Very safe. I would let my 12-year-old daughter dive with Scuba-Du." March '03.

( SCORES )

Overall A. Staff A.

Boats & Facilities A. Value A.

## DIVE RESORTS

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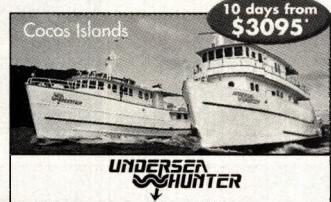
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Rates quoted are not air inclusive

## READER RATINGS

**WEB:** [www.brisashotel.com](http://www.brisashotel.com)

**90 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS** said they would stay at this resort again.

**READERS SAY:** P.M., Hagerstown, Md.: "Great value for the dollar. You can't beat the all-inclusive package." Jan. '03. R.H., East Boston, Mass.: "The restaurant was good for breakfast, but lunches and dinners were limited from the menu or, if you chose the meal plan, buffet-style lunches and dinners were the same." Dec. '02.

**RATES:** \$80 p.p., dbl. occ.

(**SCORES**)

Overall **B**. Service **B**. Rooms & Facilities **B**. Restaurant **C+**. Value **A**.

V.B., Detroit, Mich.: "Very close to the beach, boats and shore diving. Rooms were large." Nov. '02.

**RATES:** From \$185 to \$2,500.

(**SCORES**)

Overall **A+**. Service **A+**. Rooms & Facilities **A+**. Restaurant **A**. Value **A**.

## Fiesta Americana Cozumel Dive Resort

**TEL:** (011) 52-987-87-29600

**WEB:** [www.fiestamericana.com](http://www.fiestamericana.com)

**96.2 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS** said they would stay at this resort again.

**READERS SAY:** T.T., Greensboro, N.C.: "Very, very nice hotel with tennis courts, a three-level pool with a swim-up bar and three restaurants on site ... The staff was very friendly, accommodating and quick to service requests ... Rooms were spacious and clean. The hotel itself appeared brand-new." Jan. '03. M.E., Austin, Texas: "Get the all-inclusive package. Otherwise, all meals are very expensive, and the resort is a 10-minute taxi-cab drive to town." Sept. '02.

**RATES:** \$103 to \$250 p.p.

(**SCORES**)

Overall **A-**. Service **A**. Rooms & Facilities **B+**. Restaurant **B+**. Value **A**.

## Presidente Inter- Continental Resort Cozumel

**TEL:** (011) 52-987-87-29500

**WEB:** [www.intercontinental.com/cozumel](http://www.intercontinental.com/cozumel)

**72.7 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS** said they would stay at this resort again.

**READERS SAY:** L.N., Simi Valley, Calif.: "The rooms were very clean and well-kept. We had a beautiful view of the ocean and a nice private beach, perfect for wading. We received great service from the entire staff, including the restaurant and room service." Sept. '02.

## DIVE DEALS

(continued from p. 42)

through Dec. 15. (Island Dreams, tel 800-346-6116, e-mail [info@divetrip.com](mailto:info@divetrip.com), web [explore-cozumel.com](http://explore-cozumel.com))

**YAP, MICRONESIA**

### Manta Ray Bay Hotel

**3 THE DEAL:** The Manta Ray Bay Hotel announces the completion of two new deluxe rooms—the brand-new Mandarinfish Room (with king bed and antique accents) and the totally remodeled Triton's Trumpet Room (with private "plunge pool" and sun deck), both offering stunning views of the surrounding

(continued on p. 46)

## Iberostar Cozumel

TEL: (011) 52-987-87-29900

WEB: [www.iberostar-cozumel.com](http://www.iberostar-cozumel.com)

### 78.6 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS

said they would stay at this resort again.

**READERS SAY:** B.W., Highland Park, Ill.: "Iberostar is an all-inclusive resort. The grounds are beautiful, lush and tropical. The rooms are actually thatched roof cabanas with a little porch area with a hammock." Nov. '02. B.M., Ajax, Ontario: "The best all-around resort we have ever been to in terms of cleanliness, friendliness and food quality." Feb. '03.

**RATES:** \$110 p.p., dbl. occ., per night from July 1 to Aug. 31, 2003.

( SCORES )

Overall A-. Service A-. Rooms & Facilities A-. Restaurant A-. Value B.

## Occidental Allegro Resort Cozumel

TEL: (877) 348-3255

WEB: [www.allegroresorts.com](http://www.allegroresorts.com)

**80 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS** said they would stay at this resort again.

**READERS SAY:** J.P., Orleans, Ontario: "Very friendly staff ... Excellent shore service ... Fantastically close to all major dive reefs." Feb. '03. N.S., Lisbon, Ohio: "The staff was wonderful and the grounds were beautiful ... Rooms are quite small." Feb. '03.

**RATES:** Please call for up-to-the-minute pricing and room availability.

( SCORES )

Overall B-. Service B-. Rooms & Facilities B-. Restaurant B-. Value B.

## Plaza Las Glorias

TEL: (011) 52-987-87-22000

WEB: [www.sidek.com.mx](http://www.sidek.com.mx)

**78.6 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS**

said they would stay at this resort again.

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[www.bobsotoreefdivers.com](http://www.bobsotoreefdivers.com)

Presidente InterContinental is Cozumel's top-rated resort.

**READERS SAY:** R.G., South Deerfield, Mass.: "I love the location and the rooms are excellent for divers. Every room has an ocean view and a patio for drying your gear ... The restaurant's portions were awful and pricey. It's only a five-minute stroll into San Miguel, so we ate in town." March '03. M.B., Lewisburg, Tenn.: "I loved the view from our room and the air-conditioning was adequate. Twelve years ago this must have been the best place in town. It's an older place now, and the bed was hard as a piece of concrete." Oct. '02.

**RATES:** See web site for details.

(**SCORES**)

Overall C+. Service B-. Rooms & Facilities  
C+. Restaurant C. Value B+.



your needs. The wait service in the villa's restaurant is excellent." Feb. '03.

**RATES:** See web site for details.

(**SCORES**)

Overall B-. Service B-. Rooms & Facilities  
B+. Restaurant B-. Value A-.

ocean." Feb. '03.

**RATES:** See web site for details.

(**SCORES**)

Overall B+. Service A+. Rooms & Facilities  
B-. Restaurant A-. Value A-. SD

## Reef Club Cozumel

**TEL:** (888) 773-4349, (011) 52-987-87-29300

**WEB:** [www.reefclubcozumel.com](http://www.reefclubcozumel.com)

**75.9 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS** said they would stay at this resort again.

**READERS SAY:** B.M., DeForest, Wis.: "If you are traveling with kids, this place works out well. The food was like excellent dorm food and it was always hot and available. They're far from town, but it's an all-inclusive resort." Dec. '02. J.B., Westfield, N.J.: "The new villas are very comfortable and clean ... The housekeeping staff are very attentive to

## Scuba Club Cozumel

**TEL:** (800) 847-5708

**WEB:** [www.scubaclubcozumel.com](http://www.scubaclubcozumel.com)

**95.2 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS** said they would stay at this resort again.

**READERS SAY:** K.F., Fremont, Calif.: "This place was built by divers for diving. Everything is easy and well-planned. Meals are included. It is a short walk or cab ride into town." Dec. '02. N.G., Chicago, Ill.: "This is not a fancy hotel, but it caters to divers. Some rooms have awesome views of the

**Note:** Scores are based on a response of more than 6,000 surveys. Overall scores for operators and resorts are derived by averaging their individual scores based on staff, boats, facilities and value. To ensure statistical validity, only those operators and resorts that were rated by 25 or more readers are included here. Changes or improvements may have been made since information was gathered and may not be reflected in the scores.

## DIVE DEALS

(continued from p. 44)

hills and water. **ROOM**

**PACKAGES:** 4 nights, 6

dives, \$810; 7 nights, 10 dives,

\$1,340; 10 nights, 16 dives,

\$1,915. All rates are per diver,

dbl. occ., taxes and transfers

included. (tel 800-348-3927, e-

mail [yapdivers@mantaray.com](mailto:yapdivers@mantaray.com),

web [mantaray.com](http://mantaray.com))

### BONAIRE

#### Sand Dollar Condominium Resort

**THE DEAL:** 7-night **4** packages including accommodations, rental vehicle, breakfast buffet and unlimited shore diving start at \$585 p.p., quad. occ. in a 2-bedroom condo. Prices valid through

Dec. 14. Enroll in the PADI

Underwater Photography Specialty Course at Fish-Eye Photo and get a Nikonos set-up for free, one day extra (\$80 value), based on availability. Sign up

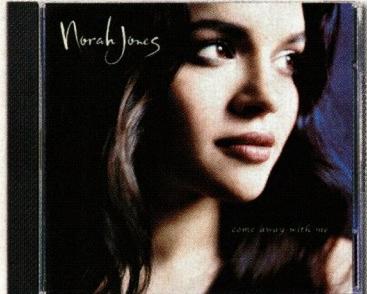
for Bonaire Dive & Adventure's

"Dive with the Naturalist" and your buddy participates for half price (a \$20 savings). (tel 800-288-4773, e-mail [USReservations@sanddollarbonaire.com](mailto:USReservations@sanddollarbonaire.com))

### FOR MORE DEALS

Log on to [scubadiving.com/divedeal](http://scubadiving.com/divedeal) to find more exclusive dive vacation bargains.

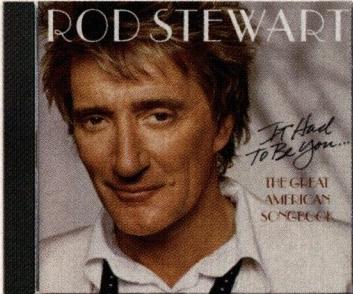
# Do you really ever need to hear Stairway to Heaven again?



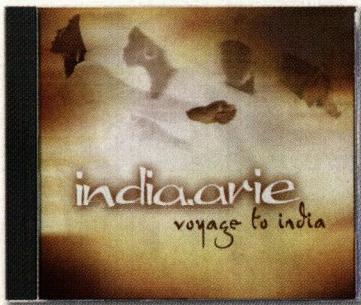
Norah Jones / Come Away With Me / \$13.99



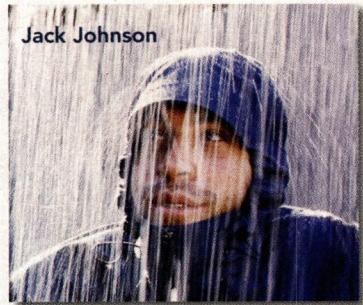
Coldplay / A Rush Of Blood To The Head / \$13.99



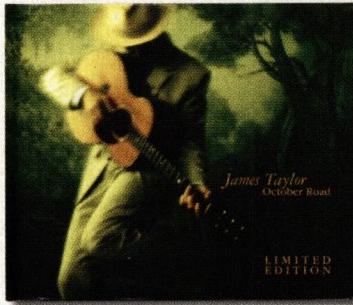
Rod Stewart / It Had To Be You / \$13.99



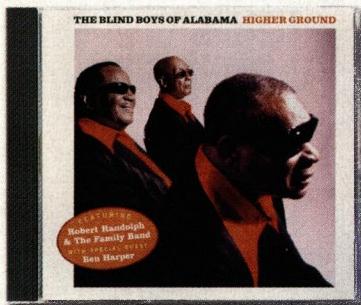
India.Arie / Voyage To India / \$13.99



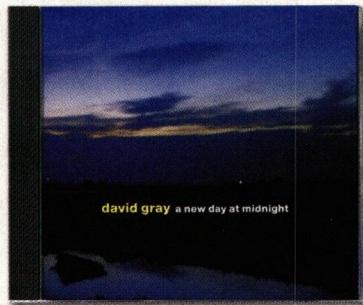
Jack Johnson / Brushfire Fairytales / \$13.99



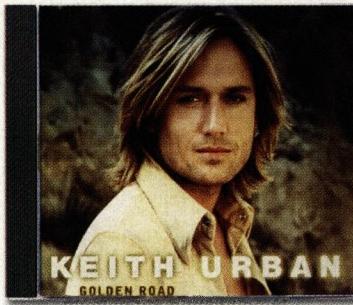
James Taylor / October Road / \$13.99



The Blind Boys Of Alabama / Higher Ground / \$13.99



David Gray / A New Day At Midnight / \$13.99



Keith Urban / Golden Road / \$13.99

Well, yeah, of course you do. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't be falling in love with new music, too.

Like the 9 CDs on this page. Each has something very special to say. And right now each is specially priced to make it easy to check out new music from artists you know – as well as artists you should know, like Grammy® winners Coldplay and The Blind Boys of Alabama. Look, you'll always have room in your heart for Zeppelin, but at savings of up to 30%, you'll want to make a whole lotta room in your collection for these CDs, too.

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8



Go where the action is: When the sun sets, get off  
the barstool and into the water.



BY JOHN FRANCIS

# 1 n t skills

the  
ultimate  
guide to  
after-hours  
fun,  
because  
real  
divers  
do it  
in the  
dark.

In the last of the fading light, hundreds of blue tang gather from all directions and stream single-file over the edge of the reef. Hundreds more rush in and join the stream like concertgoers crowding through a turnstile. Soon, the tiny fish form dense swirling clusters like a dance floor out of control. As if responding to an unheard beat, frantic balls of fish surge up toward the surface, subside, and surge upward again, finally emitting a cloud of sperm and eggs in something like a huge simultaneous orgasm.

And you thought the nightlife at the pool bar was wild.

**WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN**, even a ho-hum reef can turn into the underwater equivalent of the Las Vegas strip. Coral polyps, cowering wallflowers of the daytime, spread their brightly colored tentacles to hook up with plankton under a bioluminescent light show. Predators arrive to do their dirty work under cover of darkness, while prey hide in the shadows. And sex? It's everywhere.

You can crash this party, but you'll enjoy it more if you know a few of the crazies down there. See "Nightcrawlers" for a dusk-to-dawn overview of who's who. Equipping yourself for a night dive is the easy part; just pull out the plastic. Gear heads will drool over the dive lights featured in "Got a Light?" — a rundown of our picks for practical illumination. Harder to acquire is a smooth night-dive technique. We can help you there, too, with "The Essential Rules of Night Diving." Finally, turn to page 52: We'll whet your appetite for a little wet fun with "Nine Nights to Remember," a hand-picked sampler of dive sites and experiences where sparks fly, mantas dance and the water glows.

The sun will be setting again soon. You can perch on a barstool reliving old dive memories, or you can get out there and create some exciting new ones. The choice is yours. Just remember our mantra: Real divers do it in the dark.

## The Essential Rules of Night Diving

**GO LITE ON THE LIGHT.** A lot of divers cling to their lights like security blankets, and that's a mistake. When you reach the bottom, turn off your beam and see how much ambient light there is. (Or press it against your stomach or chest to "snuff" it. Lights are most likely to fail when you operate the switch, so minimize the on/off cycles.)

In any case, give your eyes a minute to adjust and you may be surprised. The lights of other divers, the moon and even the stars can provide so much ambient light you really don't need your dive

light on. With it off, you'll see more fish not fewer, and coral polyps and anemones will keep their tentacles extended.

If you do need a light, you may not need its full power. Try dimming it by cupping your fingers over it. In any case, use the edge of the pool of light, not the "hot spot," to pick out critters. Bottom line: To see nature's nightlife, be more natural yourself. Use minimal artificial light and instead try to get by as the other night creatures do, with nature's light.

**TREAT YOUR LIGHT LIKE A LOADED GUN.** Don't shine your light in anyone's face (including your own) or you'll ruin their night vision.

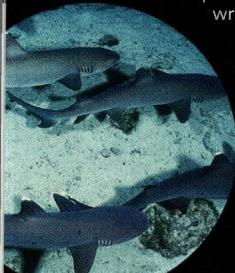
GETTY IMAGES (PREVIOUS SPREAD); STEPHEN FRINKY'S PHOTOS (THIS SPREAD)



Not afraid of the dark, are you?

# NIGHT CRAWLERS

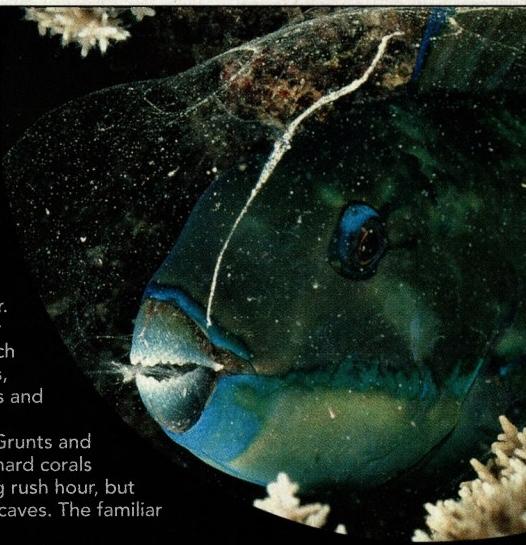
The approach of evening brings a shift change on the reef and what Joseph Levine, author of *The Coral Reef at Night*, aptly calls "the hustle, bustle and confusion common to rush hour in big cities." Here's what to expect on a Caribbean reef:



> **AT TWILIGHT:** Hunters from both daytime and nighttime shifts look for quick kills in the confusion. Reef sharks, for example, hug the reef so their prey is silhouetted against the twilit surface. As daytime fish settle in for the night, defenses go up. Triggerfish dive into crevasses and erect dorsal spines to lock themselves in place. Parrotfish wrap themselves in a blanket of repellent mucus. Mating also takes place in the fading light. Surgeonfish, grouper and wrasse engage in "spawning rises," ejecting bursts of eggs and sperm into the water.

> **DURING PRIME TIME:** In full darkness, corals and gorgonians expand their bodies and blossom with flower-like polyps and stinging tentacles, hoping to catch drifting plankton. Nudibranchs, unprotected by shells, come out to graze. Crabs, lobsters, brittle stars and urchins leave their holes to feed and mate. Octopuses and seahorses become more active.

> **AFTER MIDNIGHT:** As dawn approaches, the movie spools in reverse. Grunts and groupers return to their holes, while sleeping parrotfish begin to stir. Soft and hard corals wilt and retract as the light grows stronger. Twilight hunters assault the morning rush hour, but soon lose their edge over the daytime reef fish streaming from their cracks and caves. The familiar daytime population reappears and the cycle begins anew.



**KNOW THE SIGNALS.** Hand signals will be difficult or impossible to see, so put your light to good use. Making a circle with the beam means "OK," waving it side to side calls for attention, and waving it up and down calls for help. If you're at close range, turn the beam on your hand to illuminate traditional signals. Just remember rule #2 whenever you signal with a light.

**KNOW THE DRILL.** Should you become separated from your buddy, get vertical and shine your light outward while turning a full circle. Your buddy should do the same and one of you will see the glow of the other's light. If you surface far from the dive boat, point it at the boat only until you get attention, then shine it down on your head. Shining it at the boat just blinds the crew and makes you invisible.

**GET A STRAP.** Secure your light to your wrist with a lanyard—it's cheap insurance against dropping and losing your primary source of illumination. Most dive lights are negatively buoyant. When you let go, they will drop and dangle from your wrist. If you need to free up a hand, turn the beam off before you drop the light. That way, you won't blind other divers or send confusing signals to your buddy.

**DON'T USE YOUR DIVE LIGHT TOPSIDE.** Some dive lights burn so hot that they will melt their reflectors and lenses without the cooling effect of water. Save the bulb and the battery life of your dive light by using a regular flashlight for topside tasks.

**DON'T JUMP IN HOLDING YOUR LIGHT.** Have someone hand it down to you. The impact of a giant stride may jar your light's O-ring and let water seep in.

BRANDON COLE (REEF SHARKS), NORBERT WU/NORBERT WU PRODUCTIONS (PARROT FISH)

**STAY CLOSE TO YOUR BUDDY.** You might need a third hand to hold a light while you refasten a buckle or stuff a lobster in a bag.

**SNAP YOUR CONSOLE TO A D-RING.** That way, you can read it no-hands. Or try a retractor that pulls your gauge console back to the same position when you let go. This eliminates the need to fumble for gauges in the dark.

**CHECK INSTRUMENTS MORE OFTEN.** Without a clear visual reference, it's easy to drift upward or downward without realizing it. In the excitement, you might also find yourself using air faster than normal.

## ARE YOU AFRAID OF THE DARK?

Most divers are, at first. We're daytime creatures, and peering into a black night sea is naturally disconcerting. Experience will help you get over it. In the meantime, it helps to minimize the stresses. Choose a calm night and follow a modest profile. Start at twilight when there's still a little light for gearing up and getting comfortable. Take it slow and easy. Keep it simple at first—no cameras or hunting gear.

**START YOUR DIVE AT TWILIGHT.** You'll have the best of both worlds: Dim light to gear up in and full dark will come while you dive. You'll also have the chance to see the reef make the transition from the day shift to the night shift (see "Night Crawlers" above), one of the most exciting periods of activity.

**STAY SHALLOW.** Always a good idea when it's your fourth or fifth dive of the day, but there's a better reason: more bottom time. You came to see the show, so why not make it last as long as you can?

In-flight meal and entertainment: Mantas swoop in to feed on plankton while you enjoy the show.

## Nine Nights to Remember

**1 DANCE WITH THE MANTAS.** Off the Kona Coast of Hawaii's Big Island, dive operators place powerful lights on the bottom to attract plankton. Before long, stealthy black manta rays swoop in out of the dark to feed, mesmerizing divers with graceful acrobatics. "I still get chills just thinking about it," says diver Jim Scalzo. You can do the same thing on any ocean night dive, though there's no guarantee you'll see mantas. Turn your light on, put it on a rock to attract plankton and wait. Set your camera for wide-angle and be ready for anything.

**2 MAKE SPARKS FLY.** On any ocean dive, turn your light off and look for bioluminescence. Sometimes it's dots of various

colors flashing on and off. Sometimes it's fields of various colors. Sometimes the body of a fish (or a diver) will glow as it excites luminescent plankton it swims through. Wave your hand in front of your face and watch the sparks fly.

**3 DIVE INTO AN ORGY.** Predictability and an abundance of star and brain corals make the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary the most spectacular place to watch mass coral spawning. The "big bang" starts just after sunset between three and eight nights after the August full moon. Corals erupt with BB-sized egg packets and cloudy wisps of sperm that float toward the surface in a reverse blizzard. The rest of the marine life goes wild too. Brit-

DOUG PERRINE (TOP)

## GOT A LIGHT?

These dive lights have all earned the coveted *Scuba Diving* Testers' Choice rating in past ScubaLab tests.

► **BIG PRIMARY DIVE LIGHT.** Underwater Kinetics Light Cannon 100. Aptly named, this was ScubaLab's choice for large, pistol- or lantern-grip lights. Powered by eight C-cells, the Light Cannon 100's high-intensity discharge (HID) bulb is brighter, whiter and smoother than incandescent bulbs. Used with a diffusion filter (included), it's a good primary light in clear, tropical conditions and can even double as a close-range video light. Use it without the filter for deep water or murky conditions. *Price: About \$280.* ► **MEDIUM PRIMARY DIVE LIGHT.** Princeton Tec's Tec 400. Perfect as a mid-sized primary dive light in clear water (or a back-up in murky conditions), the Tec 400 runs on four C-cells. An efficient incandescent bulb produces a bright hotspot, good peripheral illumination and no misleading shadows. *Price: About \$35.* Close runner-up: Ikelite PCa, a bright, palm-sized light that takes 6 AA batteries, about \$30. ► **MARKER LIGHT.** Innovative Scuba VIP Safety Light. Amber LEDs make this marker light unusually bright yet energy-efficient. *Price: About \$80.* Close runner-up: Innovative Scuba Versa-Lite, about \$13. ► **TOPSIDE FLASHLIGHT.** Tektite Expedition 1900. Save your dive light for underwater use. Topside, use this waterproof, drop-proof beam to find your way to the dock and rummage through your dive bag. Nineteen LEDs offer a long burn time and a wide, smooth light pattern. *Price: About \$116.*



PRINCETON TEC  
Tec 400

tle stars and lobster go into a feeding frenzy, passing eggs to their mouths as fast as they can catch them, while several fish species get "in the mood" for a little procreating of their own. "It's an undersea orgy of birth, death and rejuvenation," says diver J.D. Barnett of New Mexico.

**4 GO TO THE LIBRARY.** This wall dive, located just 200 yards off Cockburn Town, Grand Turk, has an abundance of orange ball corallimorphs, tube-dwelling creatures that hide during the day, but extend at night to feed. You'll be greeted by hundreds of one- to two-inch arms, each tipped with a bright orange ball, waving in the currents.

**5 SWIM IN BLUE NEON.** For the full light show, break out your snorkel and head for Bioluminescent Bay on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico. Each gallon of water in the sheltered bay contains 720,000 dinoflagellates, and the microscopic creatures flash bluish light when agitated by motion. Learn more at [www.biobay.com](http://www.biobay.com).

**6 MAKE IT DAY-GLO.** Many corals and even some fish fluoresce with weird psychedelic colors when hit with specially filtered light. Day-Glo oranges and greens like you've never seen before pop out of the most mundane critters. To see the show, get the filters from a company called NightSea ([www.nightsea.com](http://www.nightsea.com) or (877) 436-9262). You can even capture these effects on film.



**7 TAKE A STROLL UNDER THE PIER.** Bonaire's Kralendijk Town Pier is one of the world's most photographed night dives and for good reason—the pilings are smothered with orange cup corals, and the polyps extend only at night. Piling residents also include enormous yellow and purple tube sponges, oysters, trumpetfish and encrusting sponges in all shapes and sizes.

**8 WATCH DUANE BLUSH.** The hull of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Duane*, resting in 120 feet of water off Key

## LIGHT BUYING TIPS

- > Look for a floodlight, not a spotlight. Most of the time, you want to bathe a large area up-close with light, not pick out a dot at long distance.
- > Look for a smooth, featureless pool of light. A smooth pool is important because shadows of the filament or reflector when painted on the reef can be misleading.
- > In general, look for more batteries (six or eight) if you want a brighter light; look for bigger batteries (C or D cells) if you want longer burn time.
- > Bulbs and reflectors being equal, high intensity discharge bulbs are almost always much brighter than conventional incandescents, while LEDs are much easier on batteries.
- > Look for a one-finger on/off switch. Twist types require an extra hand.



Take a NightSea filter on your next dive to bring out the reef's grooviest colors. Left: Find some of Bonaire's best nightlife under Kralendijk's Town Pier.

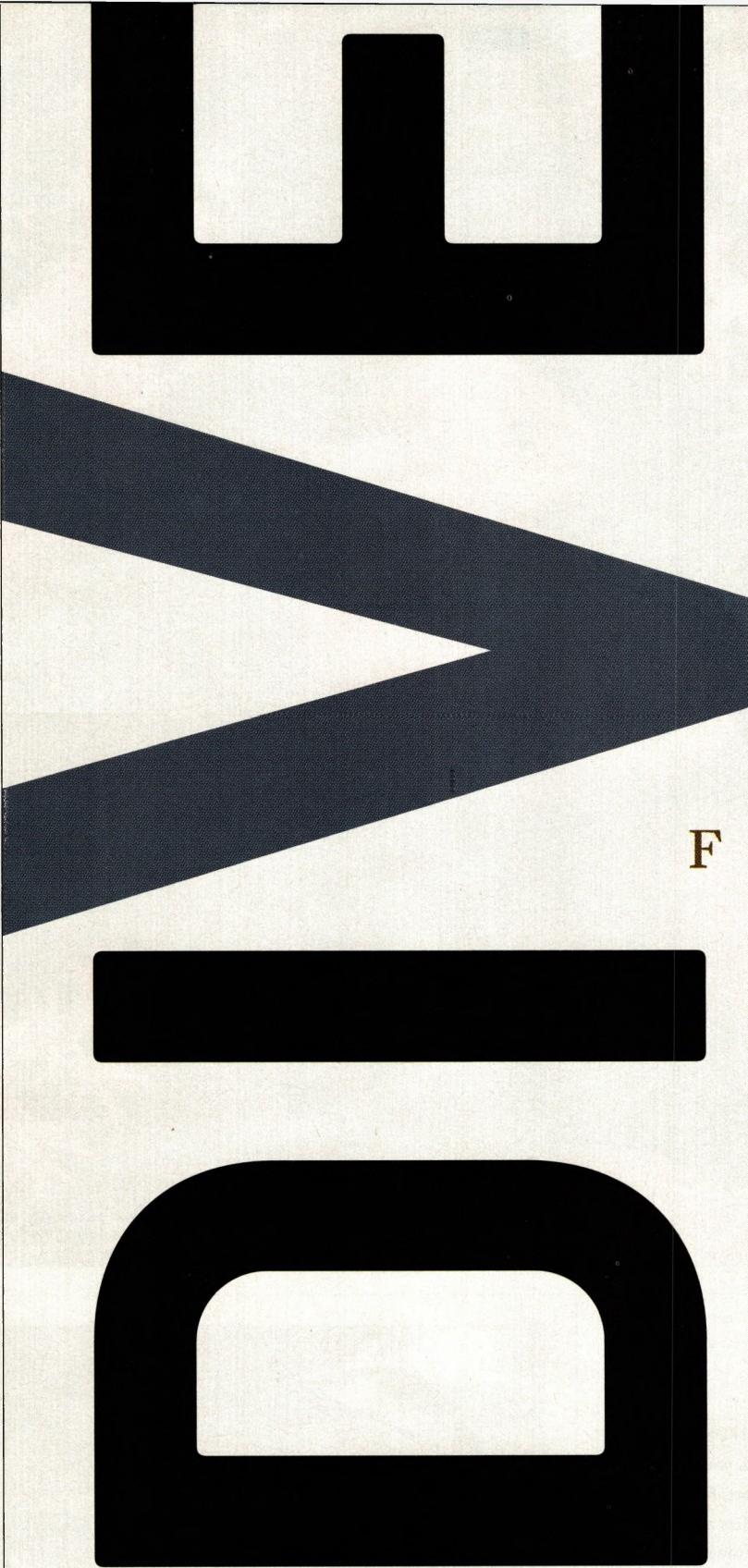
Largo, Fla., is covered in orange cup corals. When the polyps extend at night, the wreck looks like it's wearing an orange life preserver.

**9 BAG YOUR BUG LIMIT.** At the stroke of midnight on the first day of lobster season, you'll find eager bug hunters mid-giant stride on their favorite reef. Not only are these divers getting a leg up on the rest of us, they're also taking advantage of the fact that lobsters are nocturnal. The odds of catching them increase when you dive at night. **SD**

**MORE ON THE WEB >** For more information on the night dives and gear mentioned in this article, see [www.scubadiving.com/indepth/nightskills](http://www.scubadiving.com/indepth/nightskills).



Anthias swarm a bouquet of *Dendronephtha* soft coral, a common wall hanging on Fiji's deep-water reefs, seamounts and passages.



B Y J . C . G A M B L E

# Log Fiji

**AS I SIP KAVA WITH A GROUP OF**  
men in flowered shirts and grass skirts, the  
thought of going AWOL from my live-aboard  
is enormously appealing. When vacationing  
in Fiji, you'll find plenty of reasons to consider  
burning your return plane ticket.

Fiji is not a single island but a massive  
horseshoe-shaped seascape of 320 atolls and  
islands located midway between Australia  
and Tahiti. The islands are the volcanic peaks  
and ridges of what once was an undersea con-  
tinent connected to Australia. Villagers on  
Fiji's 106 inhabited islands have developed  
customs that are unique to each island,  
including firewalking, meke dances, lovo din-  
ners, turtle calling and kava drinking.

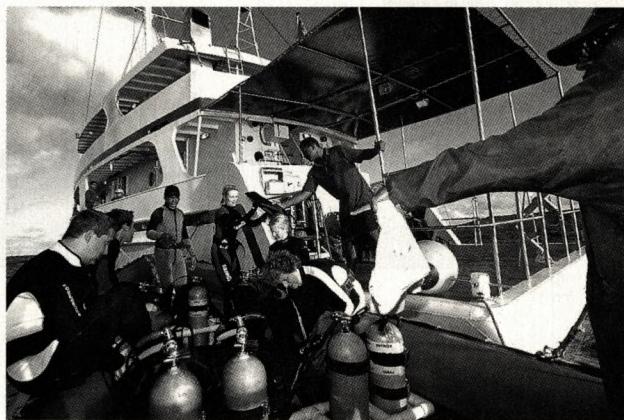
But you haven't experienced Fiji until  
you've seen the Crayola kaleidoscope of soft  
corals, their clusters like overripe grapes bloom-  
ing among the reef rock. To get the full experi-  
ence of South Pacific's soft coral kingdom,  
budget two weeks for your trip: one for a live-  
aboard trip cruising the outer islands and the  
other for a week at a land-based resort. Better  
yet, leave your ticket open-ended.

( A V I S U A L T O U R )  
A B O V E & B E L O W



Scalefin anthias seek refuge among scarlet soft coral tentacles. Below:  
*Nora* crewmembers ready an inflatable for a two-tank outing to E-6

**LIVE-ABOARD CHARTERS** deliver divers to central Fiji's barrier reef sites and offshore seamounts. Flying from Los Angeles, you'll cross the International Date Line and touch down at Nadi Airport. Relax, you're now on "Fiji time," and things move at a slower pace. After a shuttle ride to harbors in Lautoka or Suva, a little breakfast and downtime resort stopover, you're soon at sea heading for the premier sites that stretch between Namena Lala, Wakaya, Koro and Gau islands.



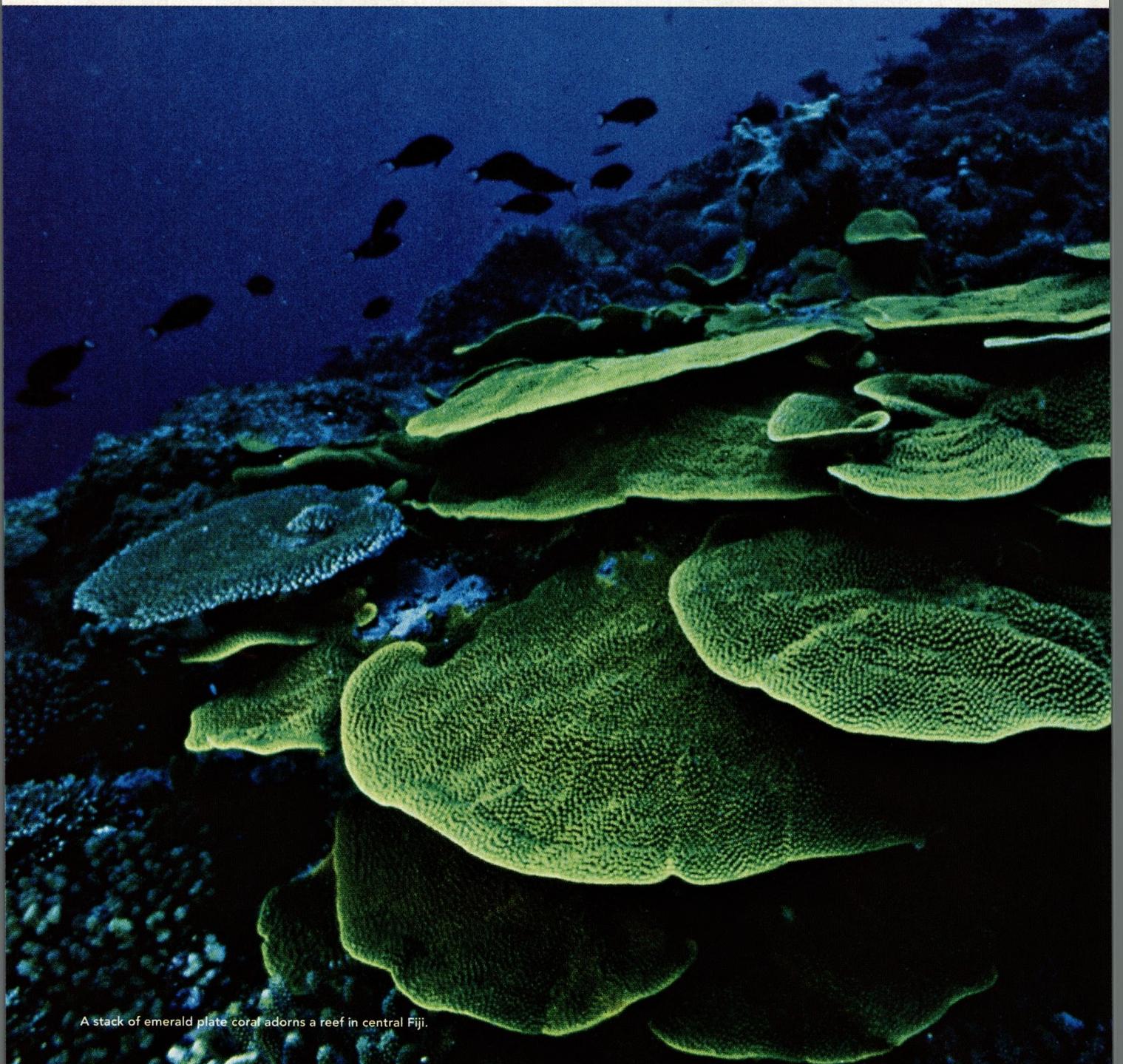
BRADLEY HOWARD/HALL BOTTOMS

WALT STEARNS



From the palm-studded slopes of Matangi Island, you can see the fringing reef that trails from the water's edge.

**CLIMB ABOARD THE INFLATABLE TENDER** and you'll soon be backrolling into the current-swept passage at North Save-a-Tack, where visibility hovers around 150 feet. As you'll soon learn, a safety sausage is a necessity. Make sure you have an underwater camera for diving E-6 and Hi-8, seamounts rising from 3,000 feet that were named for their unrivaled photo and video opportunities. Wreathed in bouquets of *Dendronephthya* soft corals, Mount Mutiny, a smaller pinnacle than E-6, honors Capt. Bligh, who passed here on his flight to Timor in 1789. Your best opportunity for seeing a blue ribbon eel in Fiji may be at the soft coral gardens of Jim's Alley on Gau. Nearby in Nigali Passage, a coral funnel on the island's barrier reef, you'll drift dive with lazy gray reef sharks, which feed casually as snappers and barracudas are pushed through the chute. These sites are inaccessible to land-based operators, so you'll have them to yourself as your live-aboard roves the Bligh Waters and Koro Sea of central Fiji.



A stack of emerald plate coral adorns a reef in central Fiji.

The blue ribbon eel, a common resident of Fijian reefs, bobs open-mouthed among the rocks of inshore shallows. Below: The lights from a bure's interior are reflected in the swimming pool of the Ocean Pacific Club, located on the south coast of Viti Levu.



BURT JONES & MAURINE SHIMLOCK (LEFT);  
TODD WINNER (TOP); NORBERT WU (BOTTOM)



**A TRADITIONAL FIJIAN BURE**, a small thatched-roof cabana, will be your home for a weeklong stay on one of Fiji's many islands. Spend your mornings diving the islands' lush reefs. In the afternoon, snorkel in shallows rich with anemonefish and anthias or explore the jungly volcanic mountains that surround most resorts. Late-afternoon showers in the rainy season, from November to April, can lower visibility on the reefs until the tide change, making it an ideal time to take in the sunset from a poolside chaise.

**GET THERE** For more information on Fiji and her islands, turn to *In Depth*, page 98, section 4.

Our testers kicked 18 open-heel fins and found five that kicked back.

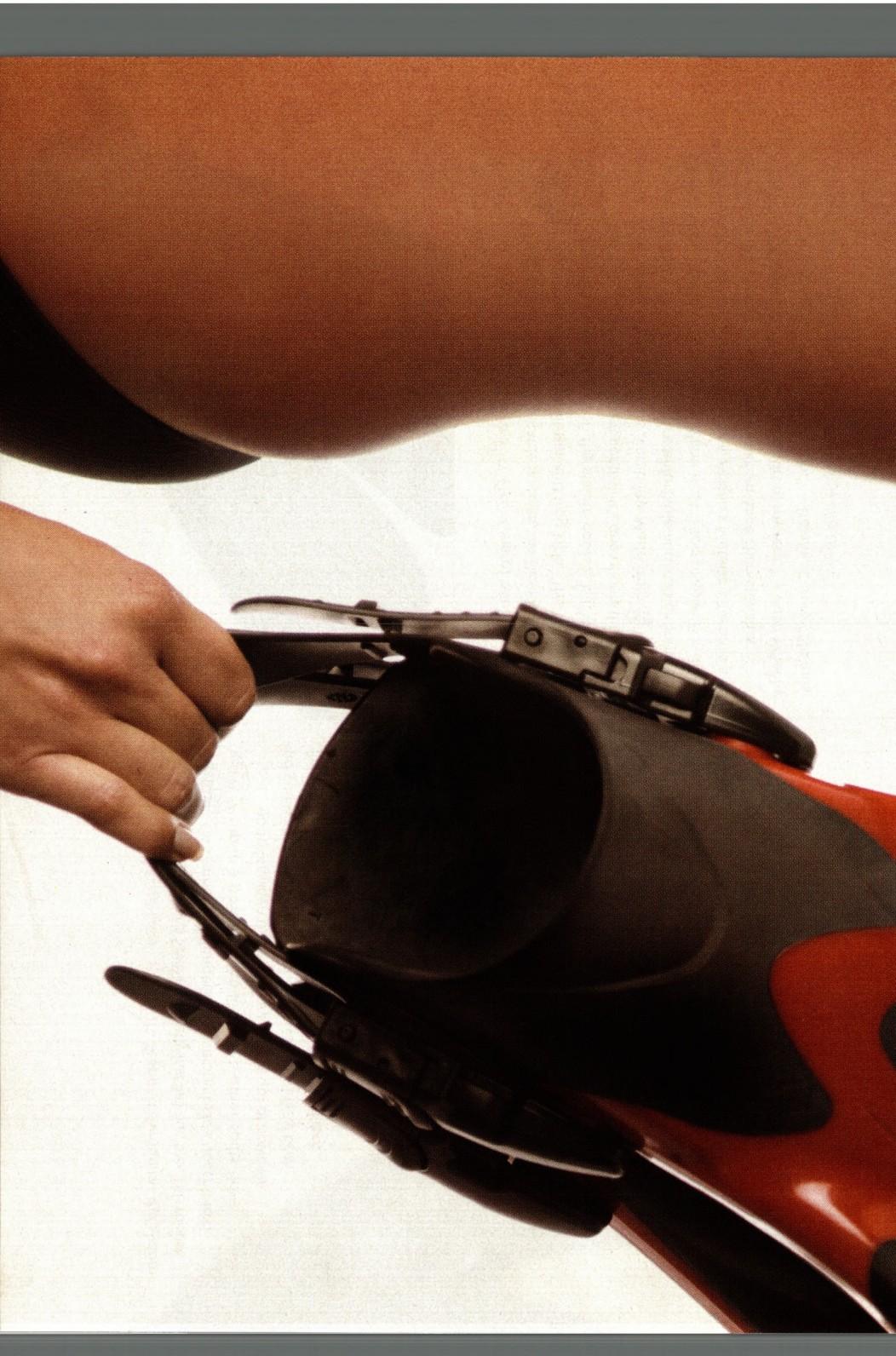
BY JOHN BROMM

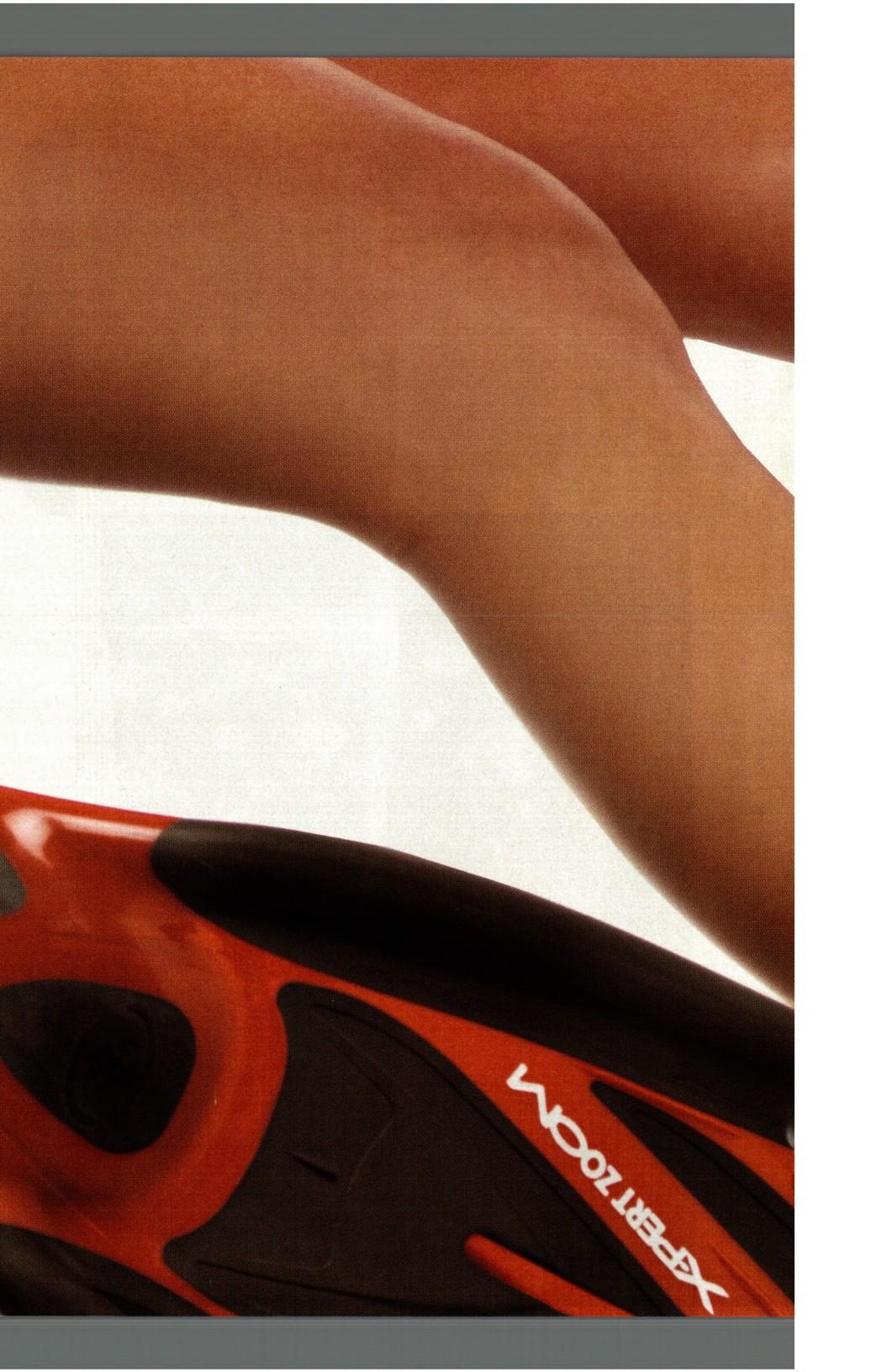
**ON A MONDAY NIGHT** in February, a group of divers nervously paces the lobby of the Brisa's Resort in Cozumel. Their passports haven't been stolen, they aren't in trouble with the *fедерales*, and the airline hasn't lost their precious luggage. Instead, they are anxiously awaiting the arrival of 116 pairs of fins in nine enormous shipping containers, frozen in Cancun customs for more than two weeks, and promised to arrive the Saturday before. It is easy to see these divers aren't here for the fruity drinks and suntans—they are on a mission.

# ROCKETS

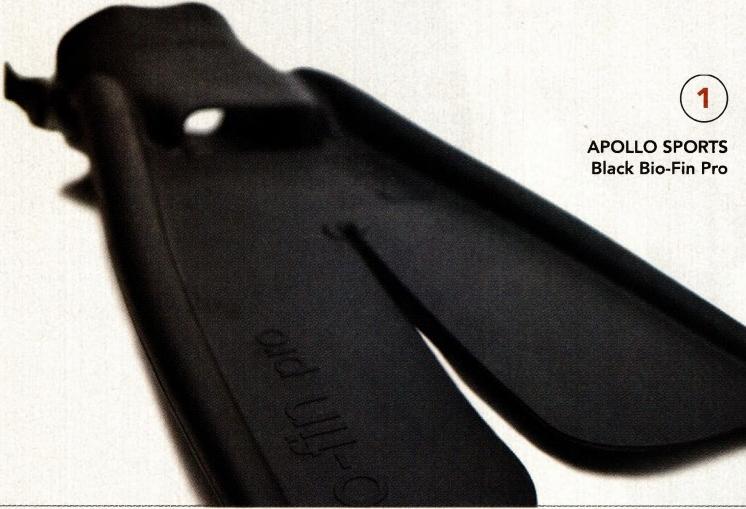
The “2003 Fin Test: It’s a Tough Job But Somebody Has to Do It” T-shirts are the first hint. And then there are the underwater speedometers. And the stopwatches. And the stacks of clipboards and No. 2 pencils. These divers aren’t here to take it easy—they are here to test fins. The testers first met one another a year before, in Honduras’s Bay Islands, forging friendships during testing for last year’s fin review. Now, a year later, the group still has the easygoing rapport that comes only from shared experience.

(see "Behind the Tests," p. 62)





EXPERTZOOM



APOLLO SPORTS  
Black Bio-Fin Pro

1

### 1: Apollo Sports Black Bio-Fin Pro

One of two fins named "best overall" in our adjustable fin tests, the Bio-Fin Pro has the fastest speeds in both flutter and frog kicks. This fin may not have been the fastest on the slalom course, but it digs into turns and provides excellent control. It's one of only three fins to earn a "very good" rating for maneuverability. Made from 100 percent rubber, the Black Bio-Fin Pro is both comfortable and stable. Some test divers noted that its soft propeller blade is a bit too pliable. For divers who like a little more "feel" to their fins, Apollo's Metallic Blue fin is a little stiffer while providing very similar performance characteristics.

**TESTER COMMENTS:** "Felt like a part of my feet." —John Wheeler  
"Very easy in the turns. Good acceleration." —Heather Carvey "No muscle strain. Excellent control in tight places." —Jim Grier

## Behind the Tests

(continued from p. 60)

**THEY ARE A SNAPSHOT** of our readership: two-thirds male, one-third female, of all ages and sizes, they have arrived from California and Rhode Island, North Dakota and Texas. The group includes a college professor, two computer consultants, a software developer, a marine biologist, a chemical engineer, a NASA diver, an energy policy analyst, a petro chemist, a senior account executive and two small business owners. With 125 years of diving experience and close to 7,000 dives under their collective weight belts, they share one important trait: a love of getting wet.

This year, their mission is to evaluate 30 of the slickest fins on the planet, both splits and paddles, adjustables and full-foots (we'll be looking at those next month). They know



After morning speed and maneuverability runs, the team boarded boats in the afternoon to test fins on Cozumel's world-famous reefs

NICK LUCY

### 2: Atomic Aquatics SplitFin

A speed demon on the slalom course, Atomic's SplitFin is pretty fast flat-out, too. This robust fin's rather stiff, longer-than-average blade doesn't fold up in a power stroke like some other splits do—good for when that eagle ray flaps in out of nowhere and you want to accelerate. For close work, the fin is both nimble and efficient despite its length. A well-shaped foot pocket ensures stability and comfort. We found the SplitFin to offer the best buckle system of all the fins we tested, with a special buckle that slips over a mounting post on the fin. To detach, you simply squeeze both tabs and slip the buckle off the post. To attach, slide it onto the post where it clicks into place. Couldn't be easier.

**TESTER COMMENTS:** "My personal favorite!" —Scott Wertman "Great fin, fast fin, excellent quick-release buckles." —Erin Rechisky "Perfect blend of speed and maneuverability. A great dive fin." —J.D. Barnett "They swim fast in a current." —Vicki Durst

2

ATOMIC AQUATICS  
SplitFin

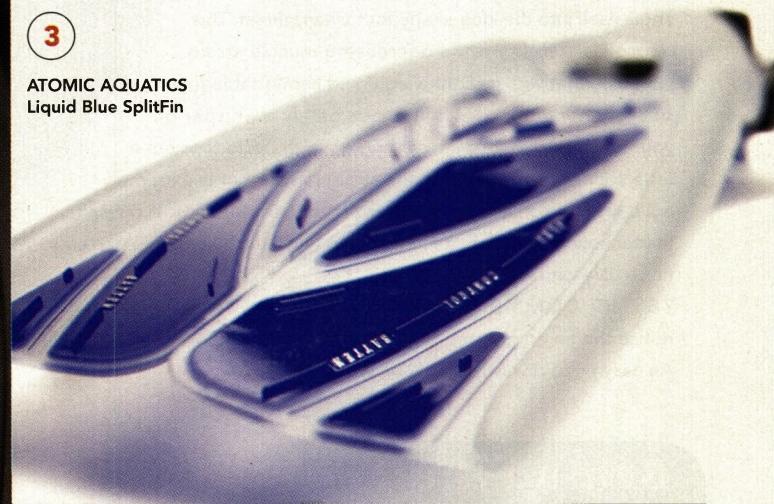
### 3: Atomic Aquatics Liquid Blue SplitFin

This new fin shares the spotlight with the Bio-Fin Pro as this year's best overall fins. Named the Liquid Blue because of its translucent look, this fin is identical in shape to the original Atomic SplitFin, but is made of a slightly softer high-performance thermoplastic rubber. This makes it a little lighter than the original and gives it a bit more snap. That said, the performance of the two fins is nearly identical. The Liquid Blue provides acceleration when it's time to go turbo, but is also very responsive. The Liquid Blue is just as stable as the original SplitFin, and shares the same excellent buckle system. One of three fins rated "very good" for maneuverability.

**TESTER COMMENTS:** "Real efficient fin. Feels light in the water." —Jeff Lovin "Comfortable. Easy to move around with in a wreck. An enjoyable fin." —John Wheeler "Good fin for frog kicking." —Heather Carvey

3

ATOMIC AQUATICS  
Liquid Blue SplitFin



that when the fins arrive, their week will be no cakewalk—they'll be on the go from sunrise to sunset, and sometimes longer. And when the cargo of fins finally arrive at the resort, they breathe a collective sigh of relief that can be heard around the island.

Each morning, a squad of six divers grab underwater digital speedometers and hit the water for speed tests. Meanwhile, another squad armed with stopwatches heads for the slalom course set up beneath the Brisas pier to perform a series of timed maneuverability tests. And every afternoon, the test divers board Dive Paradise boats to kick their way along Cozumel's current-washed reefs. In the process, they learn a lot about fins, and they work their tails off. But if you were to ask them, they'll tell you that it was a vacation.

## Putting Faces with the Fins

**MEET A FEW** members of our intrepid Cozumel fin test team:

### CHRIS CAKA

**Age:** 34. **Occupation:** NASA diver. **Hometown:** Kemah, Texas. **Years diving:** 14. **Favorite adjustable fin:** Apollo Sports Bio-Fin Pro.

Ever wonder who those divers are who help astronauts rehearse space walks in the giant pool at NASA's Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory? Say hello to Chris, an NBL training specialist and member of a 40-person civilian dive team whose dream job includes assist-

ing astronauts with their underwater weightlessness training. With more than 900 hours logged with NASA, Chris dives just about every day for up to five hours, performing highly technical and physically demanding astronaut training exercises. He holds certifications as a dive supervisor, safety diver, underwater video diver, utility diver, environmental control systems specialist for the space suits, and is also a robotics, hydraulic and pneumatic crane operator. When he's not blowing bubbles with space cowboys, you'll find him at his local karaoke club, where he belts out classic Righteous Brothers tunes. And when he's not singing, he's, well, diving.



#### 4: Mares Volo

The popular Mares Volo has the distinction of being the top-performing paddle fin in this year's shootout. The fin uses what Mares calls an Optimum Pivoting Blade (OPB), a hinge-like design that allows the blade to angle itself into the ideal shape for forward thrust. This improves stability while decreasing muscle strain. Combine that with its light weight and comfortable foot pocket and you've got a fin that's barely a whisper on your feet. Quick out of the starting gate, the Volo tops out a little sooner than others on the straightaway, but is extremely agile when it comes to close-quarter work. Bottom line: It doesn't matter how you kick—flutter, frog or dolphin—the Volo is simply an easy fin to dive with.

**TESTER COMMENTS:** "An excellent fin." —Jeff Lovin "Don't even notice the fin on my feet." —Valorie Hodges "Comfortable and stable. An easy fin to dive with." —John Wheeler

## Behind the Tests

### HEATHER CARVEY

**Age:** 25. **Occupation:** Small business owner. **Hometown:** Eureka, Mont. **Years diving:** 14. **Favorite adjustable fin:** Mares Volo.



Heather spent her formative years ice diving, night diving and spearfishing lakes and rivers just south of the Canadian border. As a teenager, she qualified for a marine study program and spent a couple months Down Under diving the Great Barrier Reef.

After high school she attended Seattle's Divers Institute of Technology where she learned both underwater welding and diving physics. After a stint in the Gulf of Mex-

ico working for several oil companies, she got hired on at NASA's Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory where she logged more than 700 hours as an underwater video operator and safety diver and met her dive buddy and boyfriend Chris Caka.

### JEFF LOVIN

**Age:** 30. **Occupation:** IT support. **Hometown:** Costa Mesa, Calif. **Years diving:** 3. **Favorite adjustable fin:** Mares Volo.

Jeff Lovin has gone from trading guitar licks as the bass player of SoCal heavy metal band Seven 27 to chasing nurse sharks and eagle rays. Jeff's first taste of scuba was during an introductory dive on the Great Barrier Reef. That sealed the deal—he

quickly got certified and convinced his bride-to-be to go on a honeymoon cruise to Cozumel and Roatan. During the week, Jeff is an application support specialist for a civil engineering firm, and on the weekends, he uses his assistant instructor certification as an excuse to get wet with dive classes at Laguna Beach or one of California's Channel Islands.

### ERIN RECHISKY

**Age:** 30. **Occupation:** Marine biologist. **Hometown:** Narragansett, R.I. **Years diving:** 10. **Favorite adjustable fin:** Atomic Aquatics Liquid Blue SplitFin.



A typical workday for most people involves sitting behind a desk for eight-plus hours, bookended by agonizing rush-

**4**  
MARES  
Volo

**5**  
TUSA  
X-Pert Zoom



**5: TUSA X-Pert Zoom (SF-8)**

This fin generates better-than-average speeds in the straightaway, some of the fastest times around the slalom course, and some of the best ergonomic scores. The X-Pert Zoom is easily recognizable by the sharp downward bend of its blade, which generates a forceful response to a relatively moderate kicking effort. It also enables you to maintain a stable, controllable attitude when you're hovering above coral. The fin is comfortable, although the foot pockets seem a bit short relative to their width. The X-Pert Zoom is also available in a special black compound with a slightly stiffer blade.

**TESTER COMMENTS:** "The advantage to this fin is its angle of thrust." —Donald Victorian "I just like this fin." —Heather Carvey "Not as stiff as my X-Pert Zoom Blacks. Good fin, though." —Chris Parsons

**GET MORE >** For complete details on all 18 adjustable fins tested, turn to *In Depth*, page 100, section 5.



hour traffic. Not for Erin Rechisky. She spends her commute in a research skiff, and her office is the warm waters of the Bahamas. Erin works at the Caribbean Marine Research Center on idyllic Lee Stocking Island, Exumas, where she studies grouper and snapper populations by tagging them and tracking their movements using acoustic telemetry. She also assesses coral reefs to determine suitable sites for marine protected areas. So far this year, she's logged over 400 dives in the line of duty.

To learn more about these divers and meet the rest of our test team, check out our testers' profiles at [www.scubadiving.com/meetthefintesters](http://www.scubadiving.com/meetthefintesters).



## Home Base

**MANY THANKS** to the Brisas Cozumel Resort for serving as headquarters; to Dive Paradise for tanks, boats and crucial logistics; and to Cetacea for use of underwater slates.



L E S S O N S

F O R

# life

by Michael Ange

( DIVE ACCIDENTS, CLOSE CALLS  
& HOW YOU CAN AVOID THEM )

FILE :  
# 63

GETTY IMAGES

(THIS IS A TRUE STORY, BUT  
THE NAMES HAVE BEEN  
CHANGED.)

## TOO FAST TO LIVE, TOO YOUNG TO DIE

*Thrill-seeking divers push the bounds of training and common sense with disastrous results.*

**MARK STRUGGLED UPWARD** kicking hard—his only goal to reach the warm tropical sunshine far above. His mind flashed to the simplicity of the plan. What had gone wrong? Through blurred vision, he glanced at his gauges, seeing his computer's depth readout flash through 300 feet and his SPG needle fall into the red zone below 500 psi. If he could just reach the wall, maybe he could stop his descent. That was

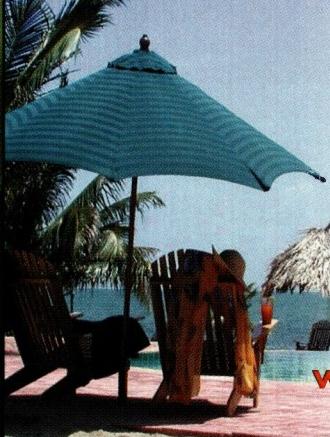
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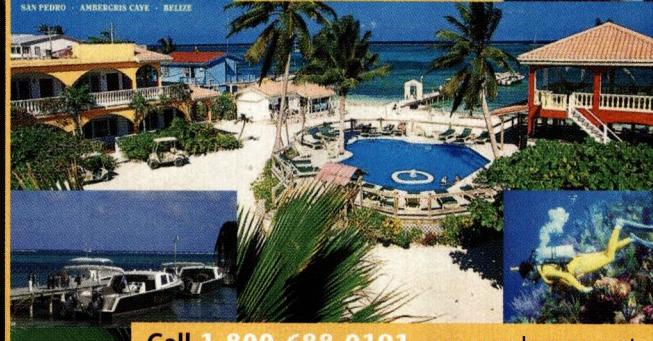
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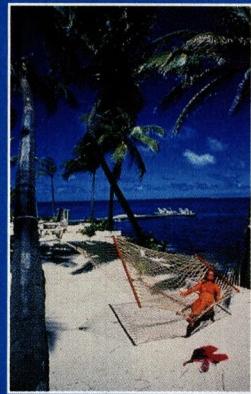
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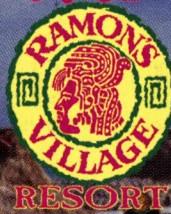
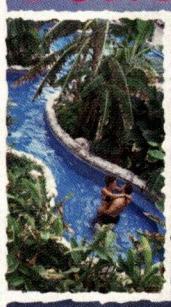
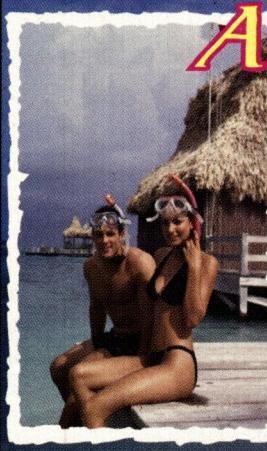
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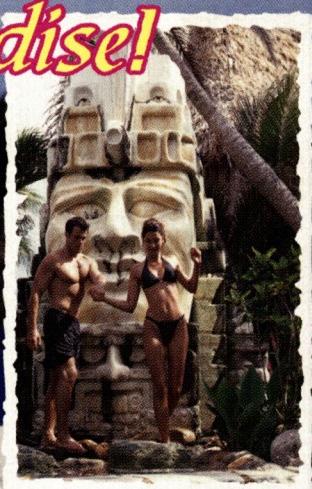
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his final thought as he inhaled against a dead regulator and darkness closed in.

### THE DIVERS

Mark and Will were both in their early twenties. Self-confessed adrenaline junkies known for pushing the limits of adventure sports, they had recently been certified as Advanced Open Water divers. Mark and Will were eager to try deep diving, but before seeking training, they set off on a weeklong dive trip to the tropics.

**Mark sailed downward, searching for the wreck. He was soon past 200 feet, and it was nowhere in sight.**

Over margaritas one night, Mark listened to a team of tech divers discussing their dive to a wreck hanging on the edge of a deep wall at 200 feet. Mark immediately decided if those guys could do it, so could he. At the bar, he sketched out a plan to do a quick bounce dive on the wreck the following day. After a little arm-twisting, Will agreed to join Mark in his plan.

### THE DIVE

They quickly discovered that none of the island's responsible dive operators would take them out on such a foolish stunt. Undeterred, the divers rented a boat and hired Bill and Sarah, vacationing college students who agreed to skipper the boat.

At the approximate location of the wreck, the boat's depth finder confirmed the edge of the wall and a depth of thousands of feet on the seaward side. Mark and Will suited up in tropical BCs, rental regulators and single aluminum 80-cubic-foot tanks. The divers quickly reviewed their dive plan.

Mark figured the wreck would be easy to locate. In order to get down quickly, they would dump all of the air out of their BCs and wear extra weight.

The pair would stop their descent with their power inflators. It would be a quick bounce dive. If either diver reached 1,500 psi or the bottom time exceeded six minutes, they would ascend immediately.

### THE ACCIDENT

Mark and Will stepped off the swim platform and immediately began their descent. Dropping rapidly, the divers swam to within an arm's reach of the wall, scanning for the wreck and letting negative buoyancy carry them deeper.

Though he was descending more slowly than Mark, Will's dive computer couldn't keep up with the descent. Later, Will recalled that at 150 feet, he felt "short of breath" and "disconnected from my body."

The rapid descent had brought on a serious bout of nitrogen narcosis. His body was unable to acclimate to the increasing pressure and the growing load of nitrogen and carbon dioxide in his tissues. Making matters worse, his rental regulator was not designed for extreme depths and was struggling to deliver sufficient air. Will was bordering on panic. He was "overbreathing" his regulator, demanding more air, and at a faster rate, than it was capable of providing.

Scared and confused, Will reached out to grab a passing coral head, cutting his hand but stopping his descent at 156 feet. He turned to signal Mark to abort the dive, only to find his buddy much deeper, still rapidly descending.

Will faced several moments of indecision, complicated by narcosis. Before he could do anything to save himself or Mark, he needed to establish neutral buoyancy. Will fumbled for the inflator button on his BC and squeezed hard.

Meanwhile, Mark sailed downward,

searching for the outline of the wreck. He was soon past 200 feet, and the wreck was nowhere in sight. Realizing the dive was rapidly spinning out of control, he reached for his power inflator, but at his depth and rate of descent it was a losing battle. Mark's BC now required seven times as much air to inflate as it would on the surface, and the inflator simply couldn't keep pace with his rapid descent.

Panicked, Mark began to kick hard toward the surface, but strenuous exertion only added to the debilitating effects of narcosis and carbon dioxide buildup. It's likely that Mark suffered deepwater blackout and drowned.

Having arrested his descent by clinging to the wall, Will was able to inflate his BC. As he rapidly ascended, the fog of narcosis began to lift, and Will regained the presence of mind to slow his ascent at around 70 feet. He had enough air to complete a short safety stop at 15 feet, but surfaced with his computer showing a decompression violation.

In spite of his rapid ascent and omitted decompression, Will was lucky. He suffered no notable symptoms of decompression sickness. Mark's body was never found. SD

### LESSONS FOR LIFE

**1 DEEP DIVING** requires proper training, planning, topside support and gear. Divers need a larger gas supply, high-performance regulators and high-capacity BCs.

**2 EXTRA WEIGHT** is dangerous on a deep dive. The compression of wetsuits and BCs compounds negative buoyancy. At about 200 feet, negative buoyancy is self-propagating.

**3 RAPID DESCENTS** aggravate nitrogen narcosis. The maximum safe descent rate is 70 feet per minute. Pauses allow the body to compensate for the increasing pressure.

# Gear

## What You Need

The right gear for your next stroll into the surf.

**S**HORE DIVERS have the luxury of forgetting completely about boat schedules and striking out on their own to explore uncrowded dive sites. It can be a freeing experience—if you have the right gear to get you out to the good stuff.

**1: Booties: Henderson's Zipperless Hyperstretch** A flexible ankle makes it easy to cross the parking lot fully geared up, while the air bubble under the heel and aggressive tread are great for negotiating stairs and rocky shorelines. 3mm, \$53.95; 5mm, \$55.95; 7mm, \$57.95.

**2: Fins: Atomic Aquatics SplitFin** Kicking out from shore requires power and acceleration, and the SplitFin delivers both. The best buckle system in the business makes it literally a "snap" to put these fins on and take them off when entering or exiting the water. And a well-shaped foot pocket ensures stability and comfort. \$189.

**3: Snorkel: Sherwood Scuba Avid Foldable** This compact snorkel allows you to conserve precious air by surface swimming out to the dive site. Once over the reef, fold up the Avid and stow it in your BC pocket. Couldn't be easier. \$39.

**4: Waterproof Box: Trident D705 "Otter" Dry Box** If you don't want to leave your small valuables on the beach or in a rental car, you can take them with you in this nifty storage case. There's plenty of room here for a driver's license, C-card and car keys. The box is rated waterproof to 100 feet. Check your local dive retailer for availability and prices.



&amp;

T H E R E



## Where to Go

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**GET MORE >** For more information, turn to *In Depth*, page 101, section 6.

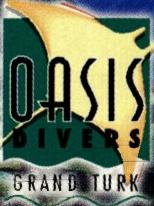
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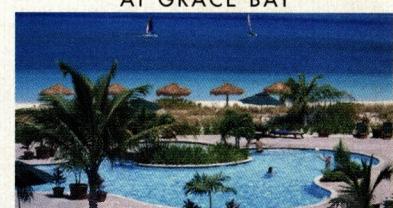
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# Training

ADVANCED DIVING

## Should You Go Solo?

It may be your ticket to underwater freedom. **BY MICHAEL ANGE**

**R**AISE YOUR HAND if this has ever happened to you: You're on the dive boat, solo for whatever reason, and the divemaster pairs you up with a complete stranger who is newly certified. "You have to dive with a buddy," he insists, checking your names off on the clipboard and heading off to rig weight belts. "Besides, it's safer."

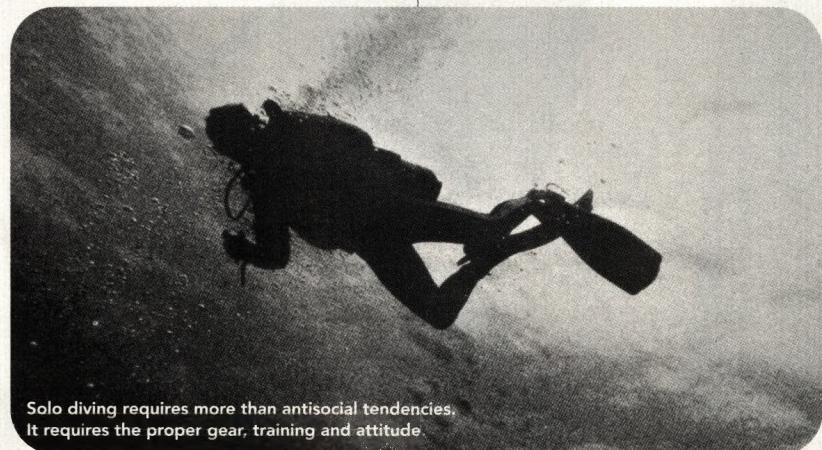
## ADVANCED DIVING

"OK, how bad can this be," you think, resolving to make the most of the situation. "I'll share my love of the sport with a new diver and it'll be a good experience for both of us. Right?" Then you glance over at your new buddy, who begins to put his gear on the tank upside down ... and backwards.

### REASONS TO GO SOLO

The mandatory buddy system has been a part of diving from the earliest days of certification, but there's a logical flaw in this absolute rule—the assumption that both divers are well-matched and equally capable of helping each other. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case with a randomly assigned buddy.

When there is a mismatch, the experienced diver is unfairly saddled with



Solo diving requires more than antisocial tendencies.  
It requires the proper gear, training and attitude.

supervising a less experienced diver. That's great for the beginner, but can the newbie reasonably assist the experienced diver in an emergency? Probably not. And if the experienced diver takes the buddy concept seriously, he can pretty much forget about any recreation on the dive. He'll be too busy serving as a sub-

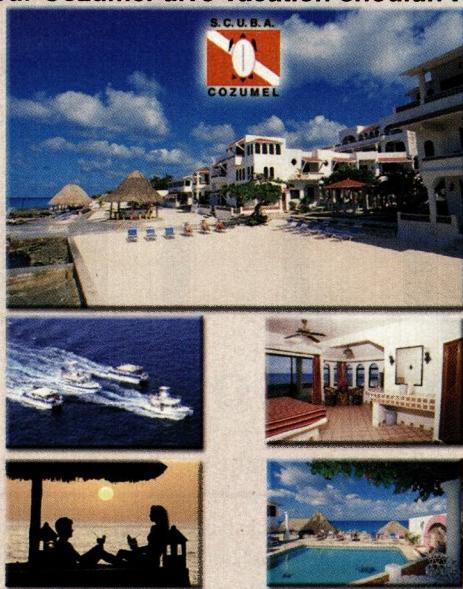
stitute instructor to his buddy.

Increased safety and the freedom to actually enjoy the dive are two reasons experienced open water divers often seek solo diving certification. Though the concept is still controversial (see: "The Solo Debate," p. 76), experience has shown that properly trained and

GETTY IMAGES

### Life is complicated

Your Cozumel dive vacation shouldn't be



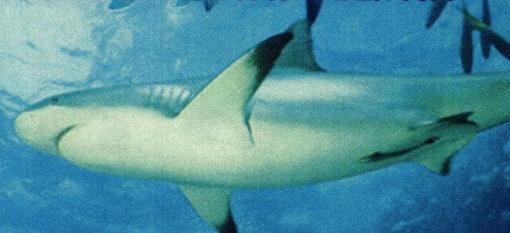
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equipped solo divers are every bit as safe—if not safer—than divers unwillingly yoked together by an arcane rule.

Let's be clear: Solo diving doesn't mean abandoning your buddy at the first opportunity, nor does it mean "same ocean" buddy diving. Properly practiced, solo diving is a disciplined form of scuba rooted in careful planning and self-sufficiency. It requires more than antisocial tendencies. It requires the proper gear, training and attitude.

### THE GEAR

Even the worst buddy serves at least one useful purpose: He carries an independent air supply and regulator you can use in case of emergency. As a solo diver, you'll need to carry your own air reserve, complete with redundant regulator.

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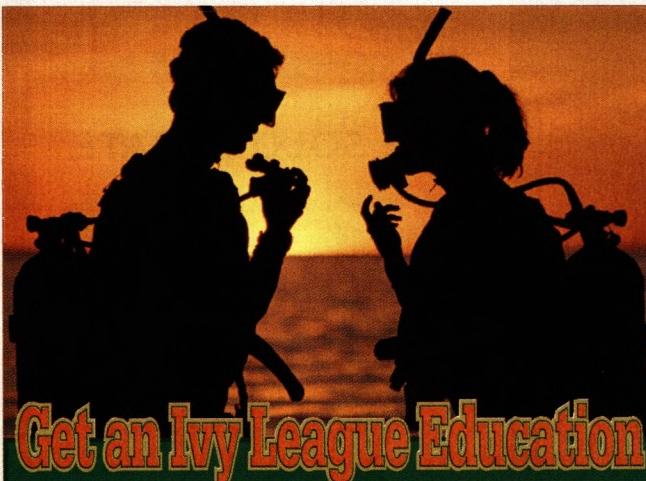
**Q:** Will my solo card be accepted by dive operators?

**A:** Maybe not. The buddy system is the status quo and many feel that it is the tried and proven system for safer diving.

A small, but growing number of operators recognize solo certification and allow solo dives with the appropriate equipment and the completion of a special solo diver release form. Some operators use their own form, but to be safe, you should bring your own standardized form.

SDI-certified solo divers can download a release form through the agency's web site. Print the form and carry it in your logbook, but wait to sign it. The operator will need to verify that your signature is real. Of course, it goes without saying that you should state your solo intentions when booking your dive trip to avoid confusion and disappointment upon arrival.

If your dive operator refuses to allow solo diving, you'll just have to grin and bear it—at least for now. Historically, recreational dive operators have been slow to embrace innovation. Nitrox, dive computers, BCs and SPGs were all first met with disapproval. Be a good sport, play by the rules of the buddy system and let your obvious competence speak for the virtues of self-sufficient diving. I predict that solo diving will soon gain wide acceptance. In fact, I'd bet my nitrox dive computer on it.



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will vary depending on depth and conditions. Compact and self-contained Spare Air systems are great for very shallow dives, but any dives you make deeper than 60 feet require an 18- to 30-cubic-foot pony bottle, with its own regulator and pressure gauge.

The nature of solo diving also

demands that you carry a marker buoy or safety sausage, and a sonic alert device in case of surface emergencies. A dive knife is also a good idea in case you run into entanglements.

As a solo diver, you'll also need to make sure that all of your gear (regulators, BC, lights, etc.) is in top working

order. Remember: You and you alone will have to deal with any problems that crop up under water.

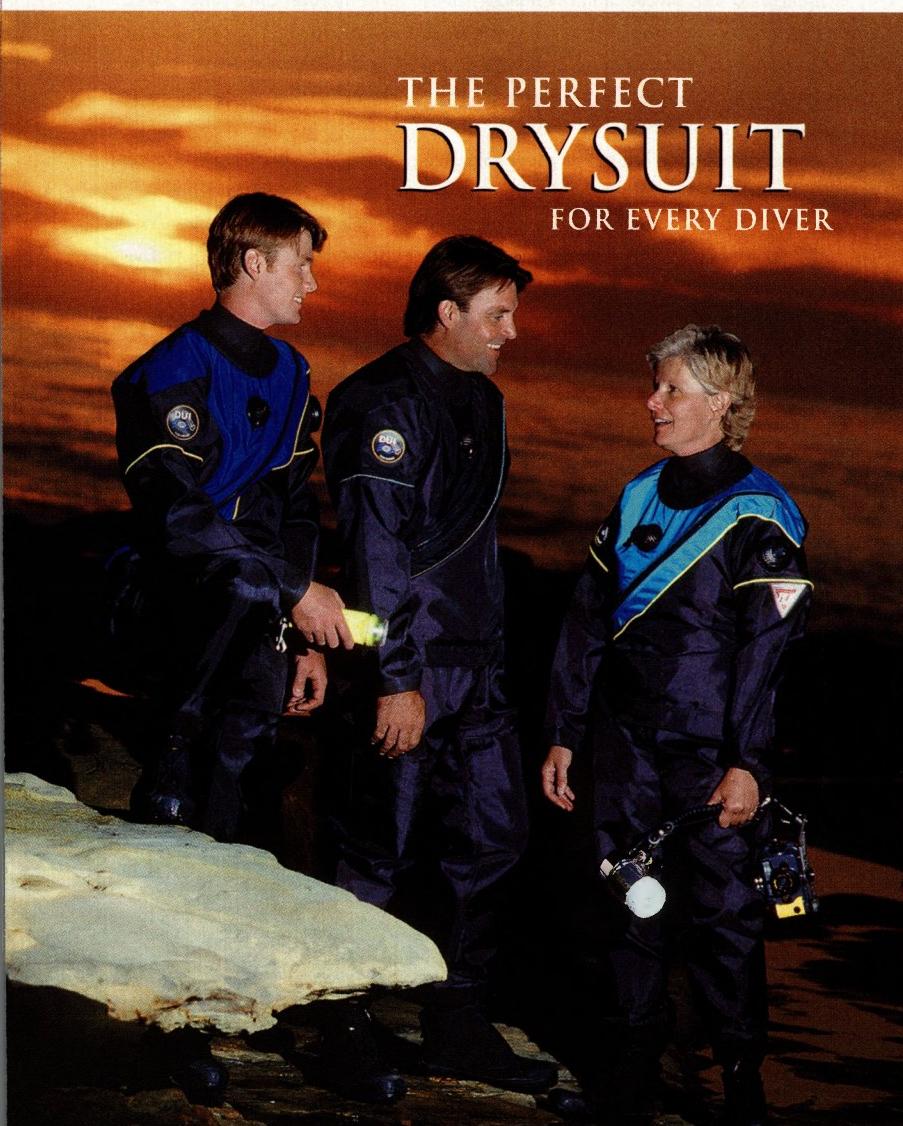
### THE TRAINING

When you begin solo diving certification, be ready to be humbled. The class starts with a rigorous skills check in which you'll have to demonstrate proficiency and comfort performing basic water skills including mask removal, regulator recovery, emergency ascents and superior buoyancy control.

If you pass the skills test (you might not; ask about refund policies in advance), you'll learn a new set of dive planning skills including how to estimate air consumption for a dive and how to rig an appropriate bailout system. Then you'll practice using the bailout until it becomes a reflexive reaction.

After that, you'll go on two of the toughest dives of your life. You'll have to complete detailed dive plans and run advanced navigation patterns—all while dealing effectively with a number of

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### THE SOLO DEBATE

In the often heated debate over solo diving, both sides agree on one fact: The majority of dive accidents occur when buddies become separated.

Proponents of the buddy system use this fact to argue the simple logic that two divers are better able to handle problems than one. They also argue that diving is a social activity meant to be shared.

Proponents of solo diving, however, look at the statistics and ask a pointed question: If divers are more likely to be injured when they are inadvertently separated from their buddies, why not train them to be more self-sufficient? They also argue that divers should not be saddled with the responsibility for another diver's safety.

Who's right? That's for you to decide.

emergency scenarios visited upon you by your instructor. These simulated emergencies will start without any advance warning. You'll be expected to respond calmly and proficiently, without assistance. Finally, you will have to demonstrate the ability to swim 200 meters on the surface in full equipment, and at a reasonable pace.

### THE ATTITUDE

To enroll in a solo certification class, you must be at least 21, have 100 or more properly logged dives and hold an advanced open water certification.

But just as important is the right attitude. The freedom of solo diving comes with responsibility—to assess the risks, to stay within your limits, and to take complete responsibility for your safety.

### THE END OF BUDDY DIVING?

Will solo diving replace buddy diving? Of course not. In most situations and for most recreational divers, the buddy system makes sense—so long as both divers understand the buddy team concept is designed to combine their strengths, not compensate for their weaknesses.

Early dive training programs adopted the idea of a mandatory buddy system from swim training programs of the day. It made a lot of sense at the time, given that early scuba gear was far less reliable than it is today. However, divers were still trained to be self-sufficient in courses that were much more intense than today's typical certification class. Unfortunately, as equipment and training have evolved, the buddy system has become a crutch for many divers, rather than the safety net it was designed to be.

Solo diving is just another option for the advanced recreational diver. It's scarcely different from any other form of technical or specialty dive training in that it allows experienced divers the freedom and pleasure of exploring the sport

to the fullest. Some divers who complete solo training never dive alone, but rather use the techniques and skills to be better buddies. Even more importantly, when these divers are accidentally separated from their buddies, solo training makes them less likely to become statistics in support of the buddy system. SD

### ( GET TRAINING )

#### READY TO GO SOLO?

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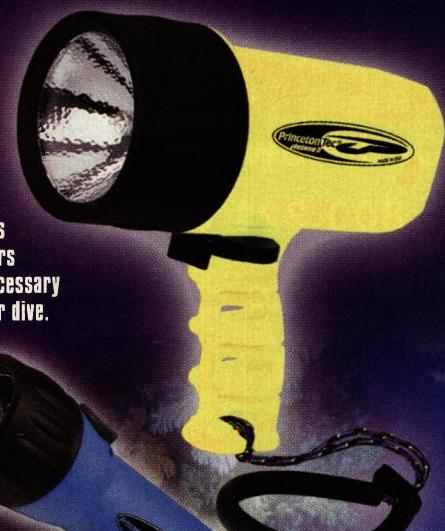


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## YOUR BODY



## Age Advice

As baby boomers become graying boomers, more older divers are taking the plunge. Inspiring? Yes. But are they safe?

BY SELENE YEAGER

**E**VERY YEAR, 4 million Americans hit the big 5-0. Every single day, 5,500 turn 65. It's a time for rest, relaxation and repose—yeah, right. Unlike generations past, today's older adults would rather celebrate their newfound seniority on a shipwreck at 100 feet than on a cruise ship playing shuffleboard.

Fifty, sixty and beyond just don't sound as old to us as they used to. What's more, older divers often have more free time and fatter bank accounts to spend on lengthy dive vacations in exotic locales. Given the choice, we all want to dive forever. But some worry that they're putting their life at risk by not "acting their age."

"We don't know as much about the aging process as we'd like, especially how it affects a sport like scuba," admits Richard Moon, M.D., clinical director of the Duke Center for Hyperbaric Medicine and Environmental Physiology. "Most scuba studies have been done on Navy divers—young, fit men. Older divers? Older women divers? There's very little research there."

We do know that advancing years bring a natural physical decline, as well as a slew of age-related health issues such as hardening of the arteries and pulmonary disease that can spell high risk for divers. "Generally speaking, however, healthy divers of any age can enjoy the sport safely. They just have to be smart about their potential limitations," says Dr. Moon.

## THE GREAT GAS EXCHANGE

The biggest worry many older divers have should actually be their smallest—namely, getting bent.

A few years ago, some DAN-sponsored researchers used a Doppler device to detect venous gas emboli ("bubbles") over the hearts of divers. They found 30 percent more bubbles in divers who were in their late 50s than those in their early 30s. They concluded that maybe it wouldn't be such a bad idea for folks over 60 to stick to shallow waters.

When researchers have tried to find a direct connection between age and decompression illness, they come up empty-handed, says long-time diver Lewis Kohl, M.D., chairman of emergency medicine at Long Island College Hospital in Brooklyn, N.Y. "It's true that pulmonary function naturally declines over time. But if you are healthy and reasonably fit, age doesn't automatically increase your risk for getting bent."

Likewise, advancing age doesn't increase your risk of carbon dioxide retention—a condition that can cause confusion and seizures, according to a Duke University study. "We wanted to see how age affected the ability to balance oxygen and carbon dioxide under the water pressures of a normal dive," says study researcher Dr. Moon. To their surprise, after a 60-foot, 45-minute dive, the older divers (ages 58 to 74) retained slightly more carbon dioxide, but it was clinically insignificant when compared to the younger divers (ages 19 to 39).

## THE FITNESS FACTOR

Bubbles and carbon dioxide aside, there are changes that happen with age that increase your risks under

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water, says Dr. Kohl. Most importantly, your exercise capacity takes a dip. Your heart and lung function diminish, so you tire faster; you lose muscle tissue and strength, and as anyone over 30 knows, it gets harder to touch your toes as connective tissue becomes tight and stiff.

Newbies over 50—40 if they have risk factors for heart disease—should have their fitness evaluated, preferably with a stress test, by their doctor before they start diving, says Dr. Moon. "About 30 percent of people with heart disease become aware of it in sudden death. Another 30 percent become aware of it in a terrible event like a heart attack. It's much better to learn about a heart condition in a doctor's office than 60 feet under water and 1,000 miles from a decent hospital."

Likewise, if you haven't dived in a

few years, get a checkup, urges Jeffrey Wilks, Ph.D., director of the Centre for Tourism and Risk Management at the University of Queensland in Australia. "Industry evidence shows that those who continue diving regularly maintain their diving skills and fitness. But we see people who dived once 20 years ago, who turn up again having gained weight, and maybe developed some health condition. They're the ones who are likely to get into trouble."

#### AGE-RELATED ILLS

Bumper-sticker wisdom tells us that "no one gets out of this life alive!" Well, darn few get out without a few nagging health conditions along the way, either. Here are some ailments common to older divers to watch out for:

**HEART DISEASE.** High choles-

terol. Hypertension. Hardening of the arteries. All can increase your risk for heart attack down below. Again, get your doc's OK if you haven't been diving or are at high risk. If you take blood-pressure medications, tell your doctor you're a diver, so you get a prescription that fits your active lifestyle.

**LUNG DISEASE.** "Many older people today are former smokers," says Dr. Kohl. "If you're one, get a pulmonary test. It's quick, cheap and could save your life."

**OSTEOPOROSIS.** With age, bones naturally thin. When they get dangerously thin, you have osteoporosis. The big risk here is tripping and falling on deck, because the likelihood of breaking bones is high.

**DIABETES.** Diving with diabetes is controversial. Some experts say yes;

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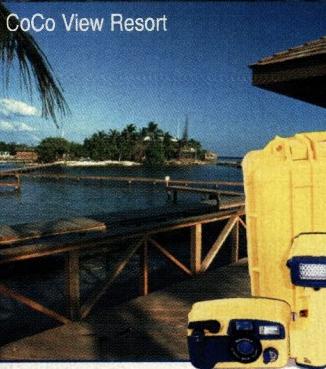


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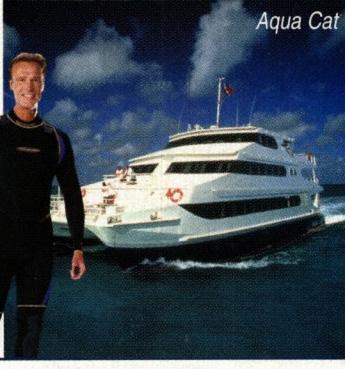
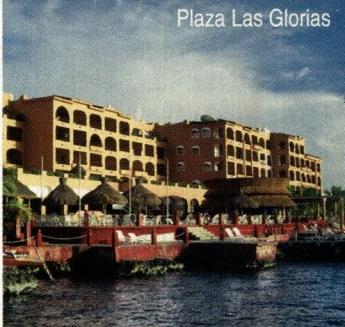
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others no. "If you've ever had a hypoglycemic reaction, however, I would advise against diving," says Dr. Kohl.

**ARTHRITIS.** If your joints are so stiff and painful that you can't readily clear your mask or get a slipped fin back on, you should think twice about diving, says Dr. Kohl.

### DIVE 'TIL YOU DROP

Let's face it: Golf is OK, but you really want to swim over reefs with schools of candy-colored fish until your grand finale. Here are some commonsense precautions that'll help keep you safe.

**KEEP MOVING!** Regular exercise slows age-related declines in physical ability and helps prevent heart disease, diabetes, obesity and more. "Being physically active is essential for diving longevity," says Dr. Kohl. Ideally, your

routine should include 30 to 45 minutes of cardio like walking or swimming most days a week; weight training twice a week to maintain your muscle and strength, and some yoga or stretching to retain and restore flexibility. "Get your doctor's OK, and start with just a 20-minute walk around the neighborhood," suggests Dr. Kohl.

**LIGHTEN UP.** Weight-integrated BCs are convenient, but they place the weight forward in a position that can be tough to carry for older adults with tight backs and weak quadriceps. "It makes more sense for older adults to carry their weight around their waist in a stable position," says Dr. Kohl.

**ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT.** As we get older, our internal climate control becomes a little rusty, making it harder for us to cool down when it's hot

and keep warm when it's cold. "Hypothermia is a concern in the water; and hyperthermia is a risk between dives," says Dr. Kohl. Staying physically fit helps offset this risk somewhat. But be smart: Bring extra layers, wear appropriate dive attire, and don't sit on deck and bake in a 7mm wetsuit if it's an hour and a half until your next dive.

**USE YOUR HEAD.** You didn't reach this age by being stupid, and this is no time to start. "These days, I avoid heavy currents and seas that are over three to five feet," says, Dick Stern, a 73-year-old diver from Florida. "Recently, I went out for a 120-foot wreck dive. I heard the divemaster talking about the currents, and I put my tank back on board and waited for the next dive. I know there'll always be another dive, and I want to be around for it." SD

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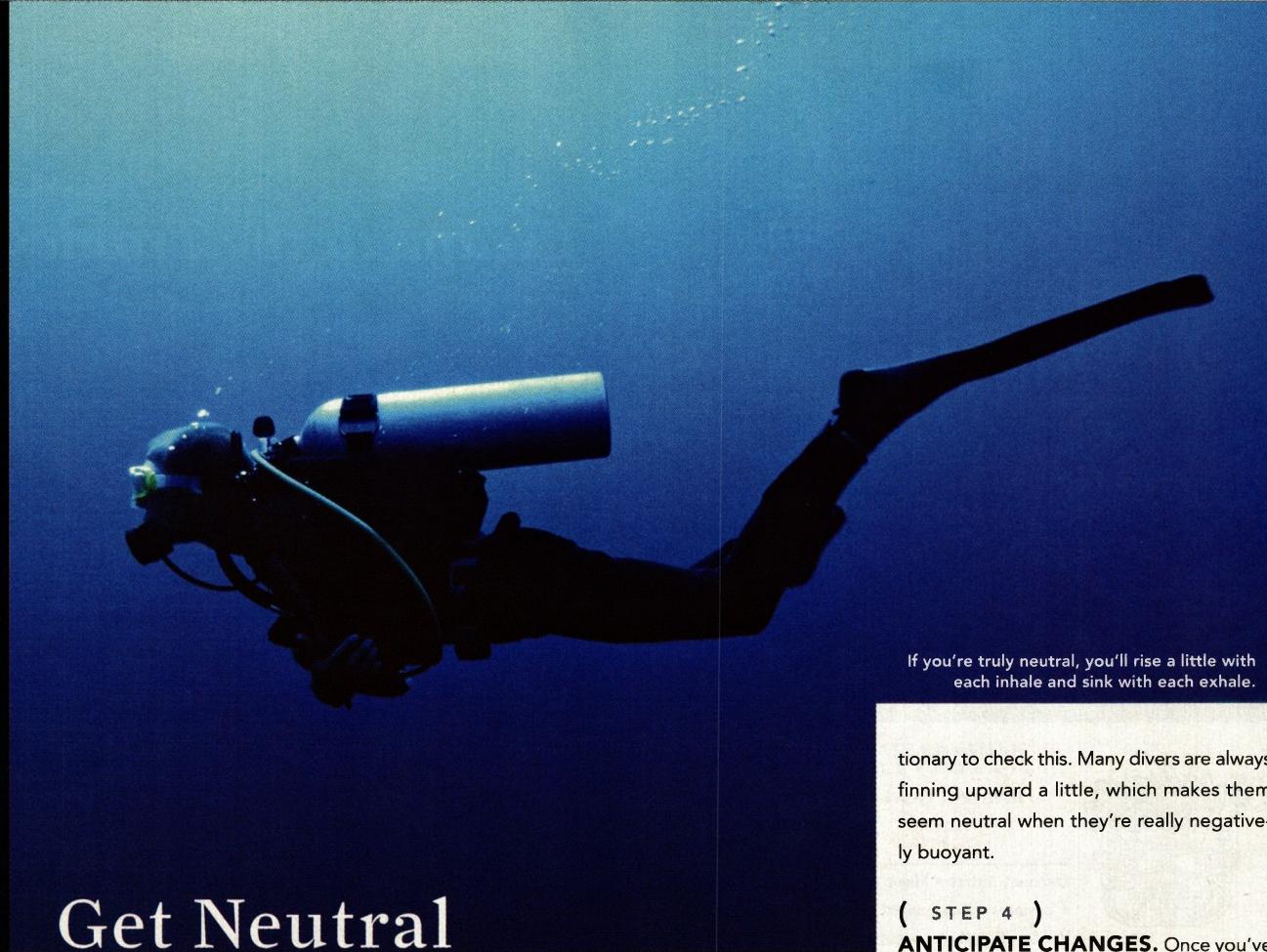
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If you're truly neutral, you'll rise a little with each inhale and sink with each exhale.

## Get Neutral

When it comes to buoyancy, the only constant is change. Here's how to stay ahead of it. **BY JOHN FRANCIS**

### ( STEP 1 )

**MINIMIZE THE LEAD.** When you wear too much lead around your waist, you'll need to compensate by putting more air in your BC. With too much air, your buoyancy will fluctuate more as you move up and down in the water column, making it harder to achieve neutral buoyancy. What's the smallest amount of lead you should be diving with? If you can hover at your 15-foot safety stop with only 500 psi in your tank and no air in your BC, you've got the right amount of weight. Many divers add weight to help them get below the surface. You should relax and empty your lungs instead.

### ( STEP 2 )

**BE PATIENT.** Sinking? Need to add air? Many divers hold the inflate button down until they stop sinking. That's too much air—it can take five seconds for the air you added to overcome your downward momentum. Holding the inflate button for even one second is a lot unless you're sinking fast, which probably means you're overweighted. Add less and less air as you approach neutral

buoyancy until you're making tiny additions. And wait about five seconds between them. Rising and need to vent air? Same drill: Let out small burps and be patient.

### ( STEP 3 )

**CHECK YOUR BUOYANCY.** You're neutrally buoyant if you rise slightly when you inhale and sink when you exhale. Again, be patient. Keep your arms and fins sta-

tionary to check this. Many divers are always finning upward a little, which makes them seem neutral when they're really negatively buoyant.

### ( STEP 4 )

**ANTICIPATE CHANGES.** Once you've found neutral buoyancy, the game isn't over. Buoyancy will change as soon as you move up or down. Even if you maintain the same depth, your buoyancy will increase as you breathe down your tank. A standard tank gets about five pounds lighter as it empties. The key to managing these changes is to expect them, look for them and add or dump a little air as soon as you can.

### ( STEP 5 )

**ASCEND BY FINNING.** You will become more positively buoyant as you ascend, so don't start your ascent by adding air to your BC. The bubble you add will begin expanding immediately, and your positive buoyancy will be accelerated, possibly putting you into an out-of-control ascent. Uncontrolled ascents are the major cause of arterial gas embolism, a dangerous form of DCS. Instead, fin upward and start dumping air from your BC immediately. **SD**



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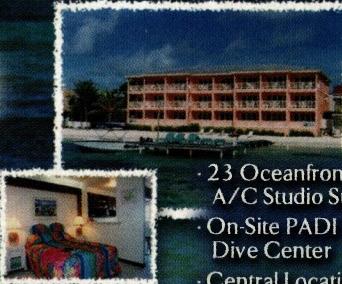
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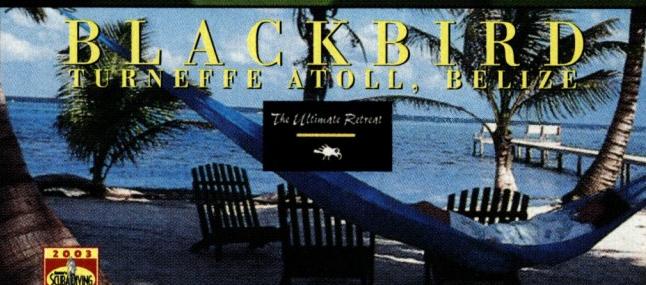
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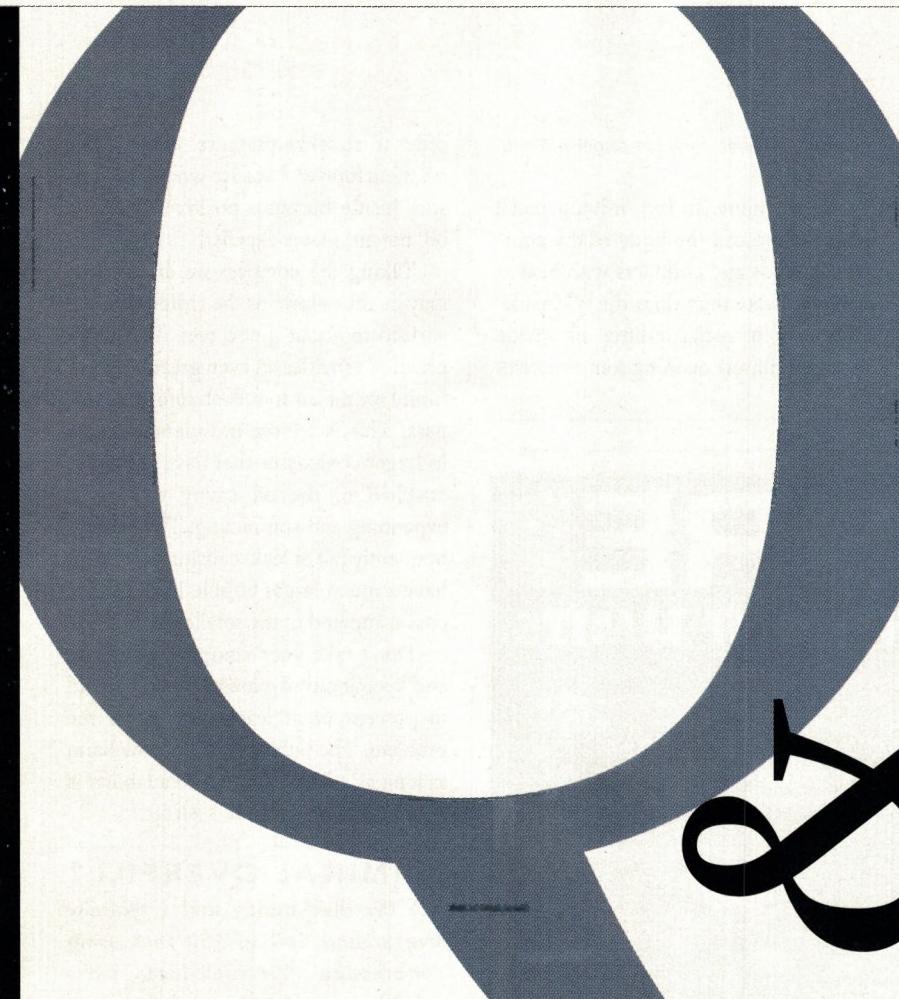
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## A Burning Question

Do divers and firefighters use the same equipment? Not exactly.

**Q:** I've noticed that firefighters wear what looks an awful lot like full-face scuba gear when they go into burning buildings. Is their air system any different from my scuba rig? Can I dive with a fireman's air pack? —Wayne Forrester, via e-mail

**A:** People often ask about the differences between the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) used by emergency services workers and the self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (SCUBA) used by divers. Both types of units serve the same vital purpose, allowing relatively fragile human beings to breathe in hostile environments, but there are substantial differences. Bottom line, Wayne: You wouldn't want to dive in a firefighter's air pack, and a fireman wouldn't want to rush into a burning building wearing your scuba gear.

For starters, SCBAs are designed for use at one atmosphere of pressure. Unlike dive gear, it can't compensate for the increasing ambient pressure of depth.

You're probably familiar with the first and second stage configuration of the typical

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scuba regulator. The SCBA is configured a little differently, with both the first and second stage functions performed in one housing. A high-pressure hose runs from the supply cylinder to the regulator, which is mounted on the back, the chest or the waistband of the harness. This regulator reduces the pressure to a usable level and feeds into a full-face mask.

When the firefighter inhales, the SCBA regulator delivers air to the mask on demand. Because smoke, poisonous gases and other hazardous materials can penetrate the mask, the SCBA regulator also maintains a constant, but very slight, positive pressure (imagine your regulator with a slight freeflow). Should the mask seal crack, this pressurized air prevents hazardous materials from rushing in. The downside is that exhalation requires more effort.

SCBA systems also use smaller, lighter cylinders ranging in pressure from 2,200 to 4,500 psi, which give the firefighter ample air supply and a greater freedom of movement. Dive cylinders are larger because you use more air for every breath as you go deeper. Remember: You require twice as much air at 33 feet as you do at the surface, three times as much at 66 feet, four times as much at 99 feet and so on.

The firefighter also has two additional safety devices at his disposal: One is a low-pressure warning device that sounds an alarm when his tank pressure is low. The other is an emergency bypass valve that allows him to deliver air manually to the mask should the regulator fail.

Will SCBA units work under water? Probably, at least in shallow water, but they aren't really designed for it and would require a complete overhaul after every submersion.

Finally, don't confuse the SCBA systems of firefighters with the full-face masks often worn by public safety divers. Positive-pressure dive masks

have two-stage scuba regulators that can handle the pressure changes of diving and attach to standard scuba cylinders.

—MICHAEL ANGE

### BUBBLE TROUBLE

**Q:** My compass has developed a bubble. Is it still safe to use, or is this

a defect? —Leon Joel, Los Angeles, Calif.

**A:** So has mine. In fact, it happens all the time because the body of the compass expands and contracts with heat at a different rate than does the oil inside. Eventually it sucks a little air inside through a minute opening somewhere in

order to equalize pressure. Once inside it's there forever, because when the pressure inside becomes positive it will be oil, not air, that is expelled.

Taking the compass on an airplane may be the culprit, as the airliner is pressurized to about 4,000 feet. The cabin pressure provides an even greater opportunity for the air to breach into the compass. This is a more prevalent problem in larger compasses that have a bellows attached to the oil cavity to do the expanding and contracting. The bellows frequently fail or leak, causing bubbles. I have a much larger bubble in that compass compared to my smaller one.

Don't take your compass on planes and keep it out of extreme heat and cold to prevent or at least slow down the problem. The bubble won't do any harm as long as it is fairly small. Readability is the real issue. —JOHN FRANCIS

### CRIMINAL OVERFILL?

**Q:** My dive buddy and I typically dive around 140 to 150 feet using low-pressure 104-cubic-foot tanks overfilled to 2,800 to 3,000 psi. Recently, I asked a fill station to do this and the store person told me that going beyond 2,640 psi is a federal offense. Is this true? The tank is eight months old and rated "+". I did not see anything on the Department of Transportation's web site about this.

—Peter Goebel, via e-mail

**A:** You're not going to jail, Peter. He's mistaken. The "+" mark, stamped on the cylinder to indicate that the tank can be filled to 10 percent above its working pressure, is good until the first hydro test, which is five years from new. During that time, it can be filled to 110 percent of service pressure, which is 2,900 psi in your case. Theoretically, the positive rating can be renewed at the first hydro, but it's hard to find a hydro shop to do it.

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After five years, it is illegal to fill above the service pressure, according to Bill High, a recognized authority on scuba cylinders. He says: "The popular practice of overfilling all cylinders without regard to actual service pressure limits is unwise, illegal and dangerous."

Of course, the bottom line is that, legal or not, the fill station guy is not required to do it. —J.F.

### STAYING BELOW THE CLOUDS

**Q:** If you're driving from a weekend diving destination, what's the best way to determine altitude differential to stay within the 1,000-foot guidelines? Let's assume I'm not driving to Denver. —via e-mail

**A:** If you're traveling in the mountains after a dive, your only real options are to check a topographical map of the areas you will commute through or to use an instrument like an altimeter or GPS to monitor elevation. Follow the guidelines on your dive tables or the no fly time indicator on your computer before driving to altitudes above 1,000 feet.

### SCUBA 911

**Q:** After reviewing your October 2002 issue's article on dive insurance, I purchased PADI Diver Protection. I was surprised to learn that preauthorization is required for air evacuation. This seems like a policy that isn't in the best interests of the injured diver. Do the policies of other dive insurance companies have the same or similar rules? —Chris Ramey, via e-mail

**A:** The clause about preauthorization before air evacuation applies if you are already in the hospital and need to be returned to the states via air. In that case, your smart first call is to PADI or DAN (whichever insurance you have) and not just for authorization. Both organizations

subcontract to traveler's assist companies who know exactly how to do this. They have arranged hundreds of evacuations before and know who to contact. You don't, and it's likely that neither does the local hospital.

In an emergency situation, where you're out on the water after suffering a

massive hit or some other injury that requires rescue or emergency transportation, preauthorization is not required. Once you reach a hospital or clinic, your first call ought to be to DAN or PADI anyway for advice on the next step. That shouldn't delay emergency care. —J.F. SD

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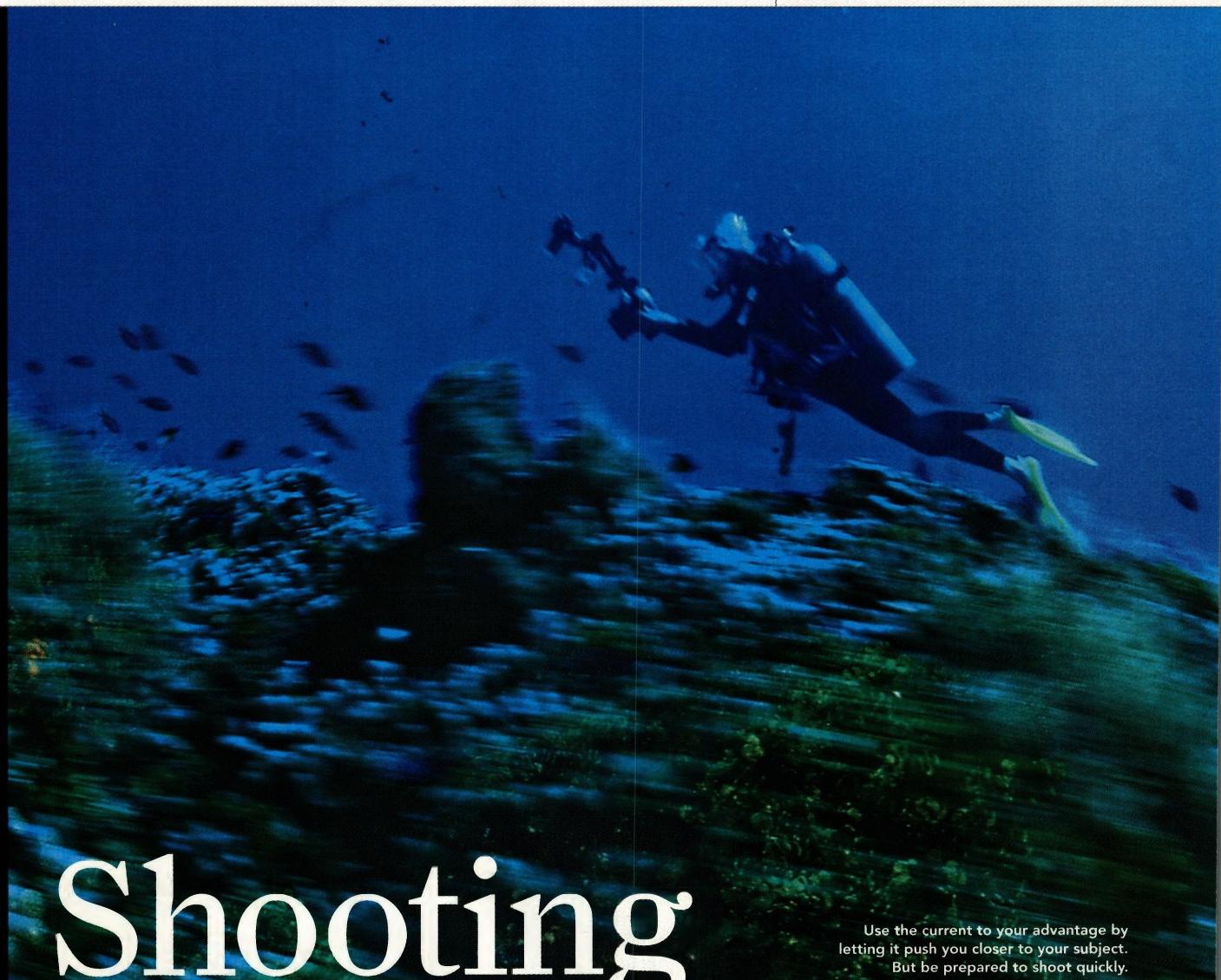


Perfect composition is equal parts skill, patience and luck.

## How'd He Do That?

**E**VERYTHING IS IN PLACE, 115 feet down on a reef off Ari Atoll in the Maldives: I've settled onto a sandy plain next to the reef, alongside a six-foot spiral wire coral. Aiming my camera up, I use hand signals to get my model into position. But this isn't Still Life 101, and just as I'm about to shoot, the model is swept away in the current. She fights her way back into position again and again, and after a half-dozen attempts—and a little luck—I'm finally able to nail the shot.

**Camera & Settings:** Nikonos RS, 13mm fisheye lens and two Nikon SB-104 strobes, f-11, 1/125 second.



# Shooting in Current

You've got three choices: Fight it, duck it, or give in and go with the flow. —TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN FRINK

**I**N AN ideal world, we'd all be taking photos in 84-degree water, calm seas and 100-foot visibility. But Mother Ocean often works against us, and we have to learn tricks to bring home the shot regardless of the conditions.

Extreme current is one of the conditions that make underwater imaging a challenge. So, if it's so hard to shoot in current, why bother? For the same reason people rob banks: That's where the goods are. Currents nourish both hard and soft corals, and attract reef dwellers and pelagics. Healthy, colorful coral and abundant marine life is often the lure that draws underwater photographers into the "Flow Zone."

Some of the most photogenic diving

Use the current to your advantage by letting it push you closer to your subject. But be prepared to shoot quickly.

in the world occurs on current-swept sites, from the offshore pinnacles of Cocos Island and the straits of British Columbia to the channels of the Maldives and the atoll passes of Tahiti. But in many of these locales, tides and offshore currents can move water at such velocity that a diver can feel pretty helpless. On the first day of some live-aboard cruises, the crew will issue emergency horns, safety sausages or signal mirrors to divers. If that happens to you, it's safe to assume currents will rage at some point during the trip. Here are a few tips to help you bring home the hot shot from fast waters.

**CUSTOMIZE THE TOOLS**

There are ways to make diving in current a bit easier. You never want your gauges to dangle and drag on the coral, but in current it's even more important because an errant console or alternate second stage can get wedged in a crevice. Hose clips and retractors will

keep your gear close—and off the reef.

A regulator that is tuned to breathe easily in normal conditions may free-flow with a stiff current pushing against the purge. Look for a reg that you can adjust on the fly. A strong current can push you into sharp rocks or coral, so you'll want a good wetsuit to provide

both thermal and abrasion protection. A low-profile mask is less likely than a bigger mask to be ripped loose when turned sideways to the current. And, of course, you'll want powerful fins for maneuvering or moving up-current if you need to.

Certain camera equipment is better suited to working in current as well. As the underwater photo industry embraces a wide variety of camera housings and multisegmented ball-joint arms that may be perfect for capturing that elusive blenny with a 105mm macro lens, there is still a strong argument to be made for the keep-it-simple philosophy of using a Nikonos V with a 15mm or 20mm lens. Once distance is properly estimated, the large depth of field is very forgiving of focus problems, and the whole package presents very little water resistance.

Housed systems can work well in current too, but smaller domes are easier to handle than massive fisheye ports. Many of the digital cameras available today are tiny and perfect for shooting in current. Wide-angle zoom lenses offer excellent compositional latitude, particu-

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**BE PREPARED**

When diving in areas known to have strong currents, take these precautions for your safety.

**EQUIP YOURSELF** Before entering the water, have a safety sausage and know how to use it. If you're separated from your boat, the inflated orange tube will show up above any surface chop and significantly enhance your visibility.

**LISTEN UP** Pay special attention to the pre-dive briefing. Any given dive site has a fixed topography, and therefore only a limited bag of tricks. An experienced local diver who knows the weather and the state of the tide can predict pretty accurately what currents you'll find there.

larly if your movement is restricted, such as when you're using a reef hook or hiding in the lee of a coral head.

One of the hardest things about shooting in a strong current is aiming the strobe. Some ball-joint arms won't support a strobe in a current, particularly when a large or heavy strobe head presents significant water resistance. But there are certain arms that are well-suited to the task. Ikelite makes a very robust ball-joint arm, and Ultralight integrates O-rings into its arm balls so the clamp locks down with greater security. I find that the standard ball joints on my TLC arms aren't up to the high-current challenge, so I have replaced their ball-joint assembly with the levered Delrin clamps available from Seacam.

While a variety of stability-enhanced strobe arms are available these days, the simple angled post of a Nikonos SB-105 works well in current. Its relative lack of articulation can be frustrating in normal dive situations, but in strong current, arms like these are an elegant and foolproof alternative.

## HOOK IN

Reef hooks are great way to help you remain stationary in a stiff current. The hook's sturdy cord attaches to an anchor point on the BC, and then the hook is lodged into a part of the reef, leaving the diver to wave like a pennant in the breeze. On most sites, there's plenty of coral rubble or barren rock to support the tip of a blunt reef hook without damage. Using a reef hook, the diver has two hands free to view and manipulate camera controls.

With divers anchored in place, photo subjects like sharks get acclimated to the presence of divers. The elusive predators approach stationary divers more closely than free-swimming divers. Since we can't outswim them, we have to make them trust us or ignore us. Being one with the reef is a good strategy.

Often, reef hooks are used at the mouth of a current or along a deep ledge close to the open ocean. The incoming tide concentrates nutrients and clear water in one small area, enhancing photo opportunities. Divers stay hooked to the reef as long as their bottom time, air or film remains; then they'll release their

hooks, blow off the reef, and complete their offgas time in a blue-water drift.

## TUCK IN

Finding a lee—ducking behind an obstruction—is another good way to deal with a current. Shipwrecks like the *Duane* and *Spiegel Grove* off Key Largo

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had to be sunk in about 120 feet of water to avoid becoming hazards to navigation. Depending on wind, tides and other meteorological variables, the same Gulf Stream current that provides crystal-clear visibility can create difficult dive conditions. Divers may have to struggle, pulling hand-over-hand down

the mooring line, but once they get on the ship, they can find plenty of places to hide from the current. Tucked into a lee, they can relax, control their air consumption and get their shots.

How do you get back to the same mooring line so you—and your camera—can make it safely to the boat?

Some dive operators drop their divers off on the bow line, letting them drift the length of the ship and then pick them up on the stern. This takes some planning by the dive crew—and proper execution by the diver—but it lets a stiff current work to your advantage.

Shipwrecks aren't the only sites where you can use this technique. Finding a coral crevice to tuck into off Cocos Island or the Galapagos is a good way to get close to hammerheads. Not only will it provide a lee from the current and prolong bottom time by reducing the amount of energy you have to expend, it also helps you control your breathing and minimize motion, which are the best ways (short of a rebreather) to get close to these beautiful but shy animals.

#### DRIFT ON

While the first two techniques are ways to reasonably resist current, the Zen approach is even easier: Drifting along with the current, capturing subjects as they pass. Depending on the speed of the current, this can be fun and productive. Take a dive like the Wax Cay Cut in the Exumas. Here, gorgeous turquoise water pushes through a pass in the reef on the incoming tide. As the water compresses through the nozzle, velocity dramatically increases. Divers fly past fish and pristine coral reef, inspiring and frustrating photographers.

The best strategy here is to plan ahead. Too often, by the time you conceive the photo and aim the strobe, you'll blow by the set-up with no way to get back. Visualize your shots well in advance, use the current to edge closer to the subject, and be ready to nail the shot quickly.

You may find some rubble to anchor yourself briefly, but resistance is often futile and counterproductive. After all, there are no doubt more beautiful subjects just a bit farther down-current. Go with the flow, and enjoy. SD

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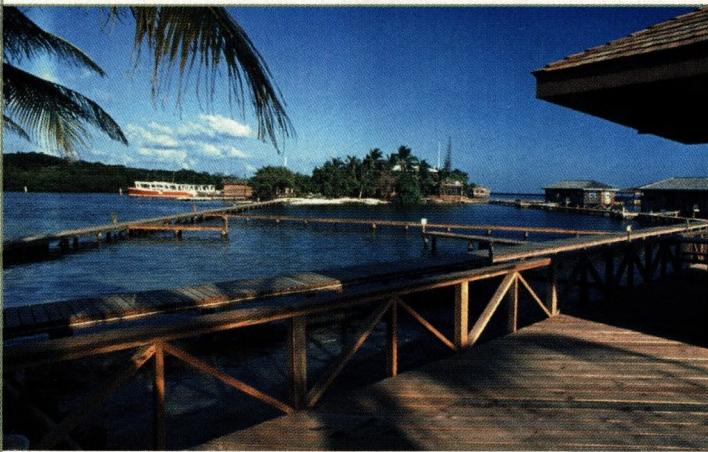
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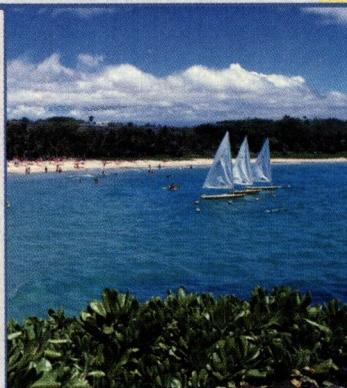


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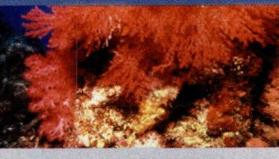
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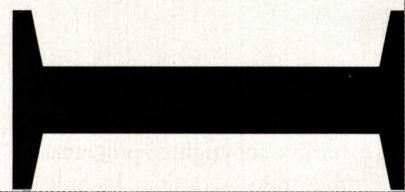


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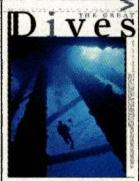
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1



**HIGH ISLAND 389, GULF OF MEXICO, P. 17** • High Island 389 is located 100 miles off Freeport, Texas. Water temps are in the mid-80Fs in summer and mid-60Fs in winter. **Dive Operators:** Gulf Diving/Fling and Spree, web: [www.gulf-diving.com](http://www.gulf-diving.com); Sea Searcher II, web: [www.seasearcherii.com](http://www.seasearcherii.com).

**ULONG CHANNEL, PALAU, P. 18** • You can dive here only on an incoming tide. Water temps average in the 80Fs year-round. **Dive Operators:** Neco Marine, web: [www.seapalau.com](http://www.seapalau.com); Fish 'n Fins, web: [www.fishnfins.com](http://www.fishnfins.com); Sam's Tours, web: [www.sams-tours.com](http://www.sams-tours.com); Splash Dive Center, web: [www.splash-palau.com](http://www.splash-palau.com) • **Live-aboards:** Ocean Hunter and Undersea Hunter, web: [www.oceanhunter.com](http://www.oceanhunter.com); Palau Aggressor II, web: [www.aggressor.com](http://www.aggressor.com); Peter Hughes Diving/Star Dancer, web: [www.peterhughes.com](http://www.peterhughes.com).

**CATHEDRAL COVE, ANACAPA ISLAND, P. 20** • The water temperatures are most comfortable in summer (65F to 75F), but the best visibility usually occurs during the fall and winter months. **Charter Boats:** Beach Hopper II, web: [www.marinskdiving.com](http://www.marinskdiving.com); Cypress Sea, web: [www.cypress-charters.com](http://www.cypress-charters.com); Diving Charters/Sand Dollar, web: [www.divingcharters.com](http://www.divingcharters.com); Escapade, web: [www.divecentral.com/escapade\\_information.html](http://www.divecentral.com/escapade_information.html); Monterey Express, web: [www.montereyexpress.com](http://www.montereyexpress.com); Silver Prince, web: [www.mbdcto](http://www.mbdcto); Truth Aquatics/Truth, Conception and Vision, web: [www.truth-aquatics.com](http://www.truth-aquatics.com).

# Depth



2



**BELIZE, P. 35** • **Climate:** Subtropical, which means pretty warm year-round. The coast, cayes and atolls enjoy a brisk prevailing wind from the Caribbean, which moderates the heat. **Water Temps:** Mid-70Fs in winter and low to mid-80Fs in summer. Wear at least a Lycra skin to ward off coral abrasions. **Visibility:** Off Ambergris, it's variable, though generally decent. The visibility off the atolls is rarely bad, but it's best from April to June. Vis off southern Belize peaks in spring, but northerly winds can lower vis and bring rougher seas November through January. The water is always clearest outside the barrier reef. **Documents:** Passport and proof of return is required. **Money Matters:** The Belize dollar (BZ\$) trades at BZ\$2 to US\$1. Credit cards and traveler's checks are accepted throughout the country. There is a \$20 departure tax. **Time:** The same as Central Standard Time in the U.S. Daylight Saving Time is not observed. **Electricity:** The same as in the U.S. and Canada—110 volts, 60 cycles—and the country uses the North American-style 2-pin plug. **For More Info:** Belize Tourism Board, web: [www.travelbelize.org](http://www.travelbelize.org). **Dive Operators:** For a listing of operators in the Belize Advertiser Directory, turn to page 102. For more information on dive operators, comprehensive travel guides, special dive deals and recent trip reports submitted by users, go to [www.scubadiving.com/tripfinder](http://www.scubadiving.com/tripfinder).



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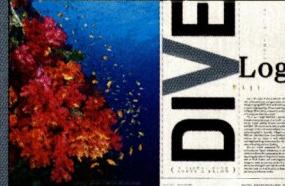


### 10 THINGS TO DO IN MONTEREY, CALIF., P. 40

• Water Temperatures: Average in the mid-50Fs year-round, though drop into the 40Fs at deeper sites. **Dive Charters:** Beach Hopper II, web: [www.marin-skindiving.com](http://www.marin-skindiving.com); Cypress Sea, web: [www.cypresscharters.com](http://www.cypresscharters.com); Diving Charters/Sand Dollar, web: [www.divingcharters.com](http://www.divingcharters.com); Escapade, web: [www.divecentral.com/escapade\\_information.html](http://www.divecentral.com/escapade_information.html); Monterey Express, web: [www.montereyexpress.com](http://www.montereyexpress.com); Silver Prince, web: [www.mbdcto.com](http://www.mbdcto.com). **Dive Shops:** Aquarius Dive Shop, web: [www.aquariusdivers.com](http://www.aquariusdivers.com); Bamboo Reef Dive Shop, web: [www.bambooreef.com](http://www.bambooreef.com); Manta Ray Dive Center, web: [www.mantaraydive.com](http://www.mantaraydive.com); Monterey Bay Dive Center, web: [www.mbdcto.com](http://www.mbdcto.com). **For More Information:** Monterey National Marine Sanctuary, web: [www.mbnms.nos.noaa.gov](http://www.mbnms.nos.noaa.gov). **Digital Photo Workshop:** Optiquatics, web: [www.optiquatics.com](http://www.optiquatics.com). **Walk the Street:** Cannery Row, web: [www.canneryrow.com](http://www.canneryrow.com). **Dive Dry:** Monterey Bay Aquarium, web: [www.mbyaq.org](http://www.mbyaq.org). **Dive Pebble Beach:** While it's possible to dive Stillwater Cove from the beach, diving and parking restrictions make

that tough. You're better off signing up with a local boat charter. **Point Lobos State Reserve:** To make reservations, call (831) 624-4909. For rules and regulations, visit [www.pt-lobos.parks.state.ca.us/scuba/scuba.shtml](http://www.pt-lobos.parks.state.ca.us/scuba/scuba.shtml). **Whale-Watching Trips:** Chris' Fishing Trips, web: [www.chrisfishingtrips.com](http://www.chrisfishingtrips.com); Monterey Bay Whale Watch, web: [www.montereybaywhalewatch.com](http://www.montereybaywhalewatch.com); Monterey Sport Fishing & Whalwatching Cruises, web: [www.montereywhalewatching.com](http://www.montereywhalewatching.com); Randy's Fishing Trips, web: [www.randyfishingtrips.com](http://www.randyfishingtrips.com); Sanctuary Cruises, web: [www.sanctuarycruises.com](http://www.sanctuarycruises.com). **Accommodations:** The Monterey Bay Lodge (55 Camino Aguajito, 800-558-1900, web: [www.montereybaylodge.com](http://www.montereybaylodge.com)) has a heated pool and fountain the kids can jump into. The Martine Inn Bed & Breakfast (255 Oceanview Blvd., 800-852-5588, web: [www.martineinn.com](http://www.martineinn.com)), a turn-of-the-last-century historic inn, overlooks Monterey Bay. **Restaurant:** Monterey's Fish House (2114 Del Monte Avenue, 831-373-4647). **Tourism Information:** Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau, web: <http://montereyinfo.org>.

# 4



### 54

**P. 54** **Climate:** Winter is June through October and is perhaps the best time to visit—it's drier, cooler and far less humid than the rest of the year. Air temps range from 68F to 73F. During the December-through-March rainy season, temps are a bit higher, ranging from 73F to 86F. **Water Conditions and Temps:** Pack a safety sausage in your dive bag—Fiji has major-league current and serious tidal changes. Water temps can drop to 75F. If you get chilled easily under water, you'll need at least a 3mm wetsuit; some divers even wear 5- to 6mm suits with hoods. During the rainy season, water temps can climb into the low 80Fs. **Documents:** U.S. and Canadian citizens need a passport valid for more than three months from their date of entry. Visas are granted at the airport on arrival for a stay of four months. **Money Matters:** The Fijian dollar is the local currency. At press time, F\$2 was worth about US\$1. Credit cards are accepted at larger resorts. There is a F\$20 departure tax. **Time:** Fiji is 20 hours ahead of Los Angeles and Pacific Standard Time, 17 hours ahead of New York and Eastern Standard Time. **Electricity:** 240 volts, with three-pronged Australian-type outlets. Some resorts and live-aboards supply 110 voltage or provide converters. **Dive Operators:** For a list of dive operators and live-aboards in Fiji, plus comprehensive travel guides, special dive deals and recent trip reports submitted by users, go to [www.scubadiving.com/tripfinder](http://www.scubadiving.com/tripfinder). **For More Info:** Fiji Visitors Bureau, web: [www.bulafiji.com](http://www.bulafiji.com).

### DIVE LOG, FIJI, P. 54

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Brac Caribbean Beach Village 1-866-THE-BRAC see ad pg. 22  
Brac Reef Beach Resort 1-800-594-0843 see ad pg. 22  
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Princeton Tec 1-800-257-9080 see ad pg. 77

Sherwood Scuba 1-949-581-8069

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# 5

## ADJUSTABLE FINS, P. 60

### Other Fins Tested:

**Aeris Velocity** A flexible panel in the center of the blade contributes to stability and acceleration. While not the quickest on the slalom course, these fins provide good maneuverability, and are efficient when using the frog kick.

**Aqua Lung Blades II** The Blades II offer good all-around ergonomic performance and are especially easy to put on, take off and adjust, thanks to a new buckle system that connects at the heel. They're a bit stiff, but above-average speeds were reached.

**Aqua Lung V-Tek** They didn't tear our booties off coming out of the starting gate, but after a while, we could achieve some good speeds. The fins aren't as peppy on the slalom course. Shorter foot pockets.

**Dacor Panther** They are slow on the straightaways, but these fins, which also use OPB technology, are even slower around the slalom course. A lot of leg and ankle stress produces very little propulsion. They are also stiff and difficult to maneuver.

**Dacor Tiger (Blue)** Test divers either loved the Tiger

Blues or hated them. Utilizing Optimized Pivoting Blade (OPB) technology, the fins generate only fair speeds and slalom course times, but good overall scores. Also available in a stiffer black version.

**Genesis Scuba Aquaflex** The Aquaflex fins are among the fastest paddle fins on the straightaways, but among the slowest on the slalom course. The stiff blade isn't very responsive to small foot movements.

**Genesis Scuba Blitz** These fins achieve respectable speeds in both flutter and frog kicks, but on the slalom course these fins are slow and difficult to control. They tend to be too much fin for female divers. Foot pockets are comfortable.

**Mares Avanti Quattro** Explosive out of the gate, these fins smoke most other paddles in top speed. However, they're heavy for paddles and somewhat stiff. Considered a power fin, they're also both stable and highly maneuverable in close quarters.

**Oceanic Vector** Versatile fins that are very efficient on the slalom course. They're also one of only three fins that earned a "very good" maneuverability rating. Fit is a problem among women, as the foot



### A DIFFERENT KIND OF FIN

**Zeagle Teleoz** The Teleoz was the orange among apples in our fin tests. Sandal-like straps atop a flat, board-like blade produced a fin that was slippery when we walked with them, unstable at depth and borderline useless in a strong current. This fin represents a completely different category of fin design—travel fins—and we plan to review them head-to-head in a future issue.

pockets are too short and too wide.

**Oceanic Vortex V-12** They're quick as a cat on the slalom course, but these heavy fins only kick up middle-of-the-pack speeds while pumping straight ahead. While they are considered stable, comfortable fins by men, women commented that the extra-small is a little over-sized.

**Scubapro Twin Jet Graphite** Short, wide fin blades provide very good stability. The fins are sluggish

### Adjustable Fins: Features & Performance

	PRICE	FIT STYLE	FOOT POCKETS	SIZES	MADE IN	WARRANTY	S P E C S		PERFORMANCE								
							MOST IMPORTANT	MODERATELY IMPORTANT	CONVENIENCE ELEMENTS								
<b>AERIS</b> Velocity	\$89.95	Paddle	Closed toe	3	Italy	2 years	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3
<b>APOLLO SPORTS</b> Black Bio-Fin Pro	\$190	Split	Open toe	5	Japan	Limited lifetime	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
<b>AQUA LUNG</b> Blades II	\$125	Paddle	Closed toe	3	Italy	2-year limited	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
<b>AQUA LUNG</b> V-Tek	\$140	Split	Closed toe	4	Japan	Limited lifetime	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
<b>ATOMIC AQUATICS</b> Liquid Blue SplitFin	\$199	Split	Open toe	4	Taiwan	1 year	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4
<b>ATOMIC AQUATICS</b> SplitFin	\$189	Split	Open toe	4	Taiwan	1 year	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4
<b>DACOR</b> Panther	\$130	Paddle	Closed toe	3	Italy	Lifetime on separation, 1 year on manufacturing defects	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
<b>DACOR</b> Tiger (Blue)	\$190	Paddle	Closed toe	3	Italy	Lifetime on separation, 1 year on manufacturing defects	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>GENESIS SCUBA</b> Aquaflex	\$95	Paddle	Closed toe	3	Estonia	2 years	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3
<b>GENESIS SCUBA</b> Blitz	\$180	Split	Open toe	3	USA	2 years	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3
<b>MARES</b> Avanti Quattro	\$139	Paddle	Closed toe	3	Italy	1 year	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4
<b>MARES</b> Volo	\$199	Paddle	Closed toe	3	Italy	1 year	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4
<b>OCEANIC</b> Vector	\$79.95	Paddle	Closed toe	3	Italy	1 year	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3
<b>OCEANIC</b> Vortex V-12	\$189.95	Split	Closed toe	4	Italy	Limited lifetime	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>SCUBAPRO</b> Twin Jet Graphite	\$189	Split	Open toe	4	USA	Limited lifetime	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
<b>SHERWOOD SCUBA</b> Trek	\$180	Split	Open toe	3	USA	2 years	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3
<b>TUSA</b> X-Pert Zoom	\$175	Split	Closed toe	3	Taiwan	3 years	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4

RATING SYSTEM: 5=EXCELLENT 4=VERY GOOD 3=GOOD 2=FAIR 1=POOR

#### MOST IMPORTANT

**Power vs. Stress.** The perception of power produced vs. effort required.

**Stability.** How much the fins wobble, slice from side to side or hit each other during the kick cycle.

**Acceleration.** During an underwater swim, the ability to quickly pick up speed.

#### MODERATELY IMPORTANT

**Fit & Comfort.** Of foot pocket.

**Alternate Kicks.** Ease and effectiveness of frog and dolphin kicks.

**Surface Swim.** Both face-down and while on the back.

#### CONVENIENCE ELEMENTS

**Donning/Doffing.** Prior to dive, after the dive.

**Adjusting for Fit.** Ease of using buckles and straps, both in and out of the water.

**Non-Skid.** The sense of security on a wet boat deck geared up while wearing fins.

# URGENT SAFETY RECALL NOTICE

PADI recently issued a recall notice for select Recreational Dive Planners (RDP). Errors by the printer caused inaccurate or missing numbers on RDPs shipped between 1 June 2002 and 31 January 2003. Please note not all RDPs shipped during this period contain errors.

While analysis of the misprints shows that the risk of injury from errors is remote, for the sake of safety, we ask that you immediately check any RDP that you purchased or received during this period. Instructions on how to check your RDP(s) and a complete list of specific product numbers and production codes is located at <http://www.padi.com/rdprecall> or you may take your RDP to any PADI Dive Center or Resort for a free replacement.

## DO NOT PLAN YOUR DIVES USING ANY OF THESE TABLES.

In the United States and Canada, you may call our toll free number at 866-698-0974 or worldwide visit <http://www.padi.com/rdprecall> or write us at the address below for more information on this recall:

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**GEAR & THERE, P. 70** • **Climates:** Sunny and dry, with temperatures fluctuating between 75F and 85F. **Water Temps:** Average is 80F. **Documents:** A passport is necessary for international travel to Bonaire. **For More Information:** Tourism Corporation of Bonaire, web: [www.info-bonaire.com](http://www.info-bonaire.com).

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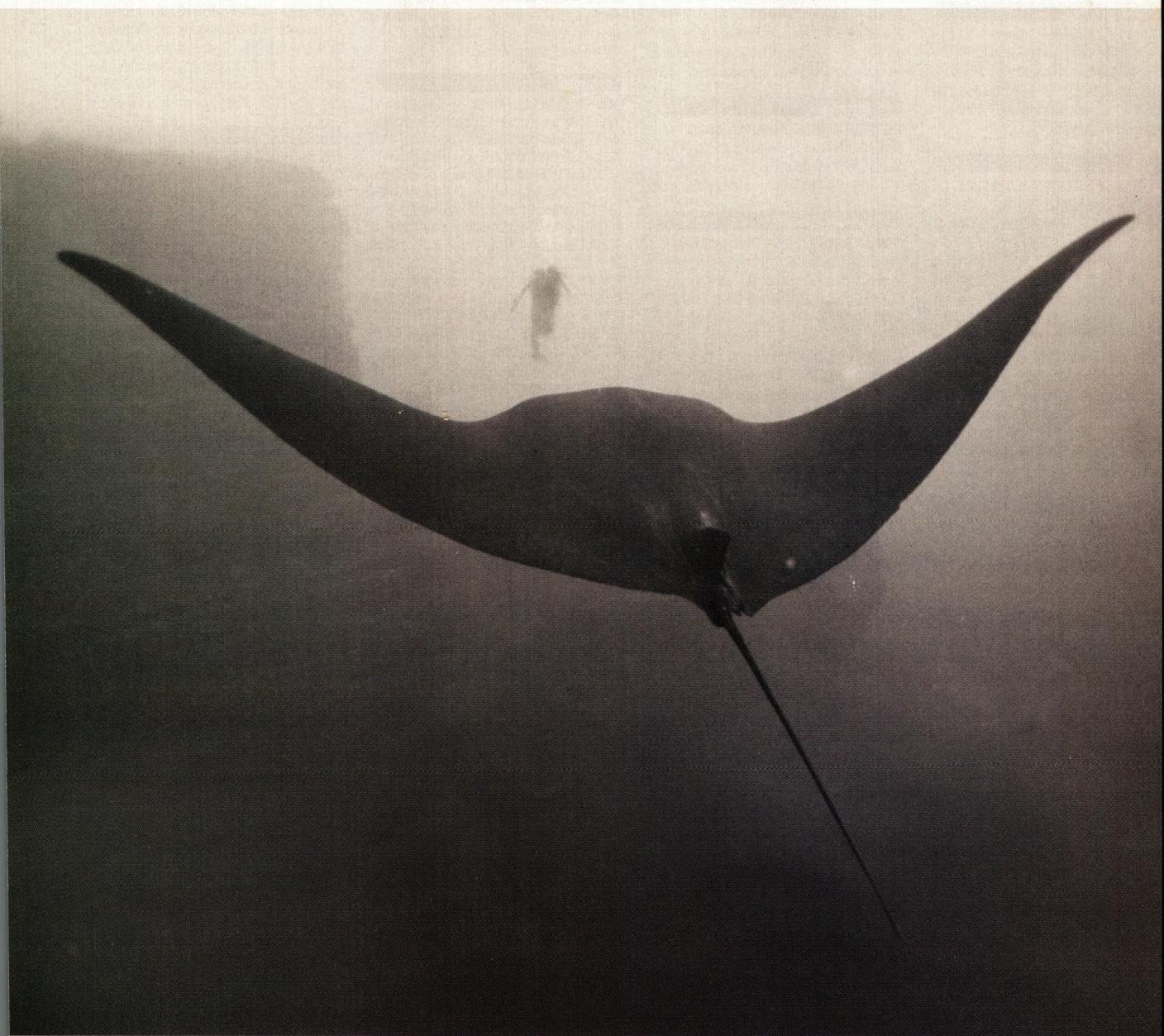
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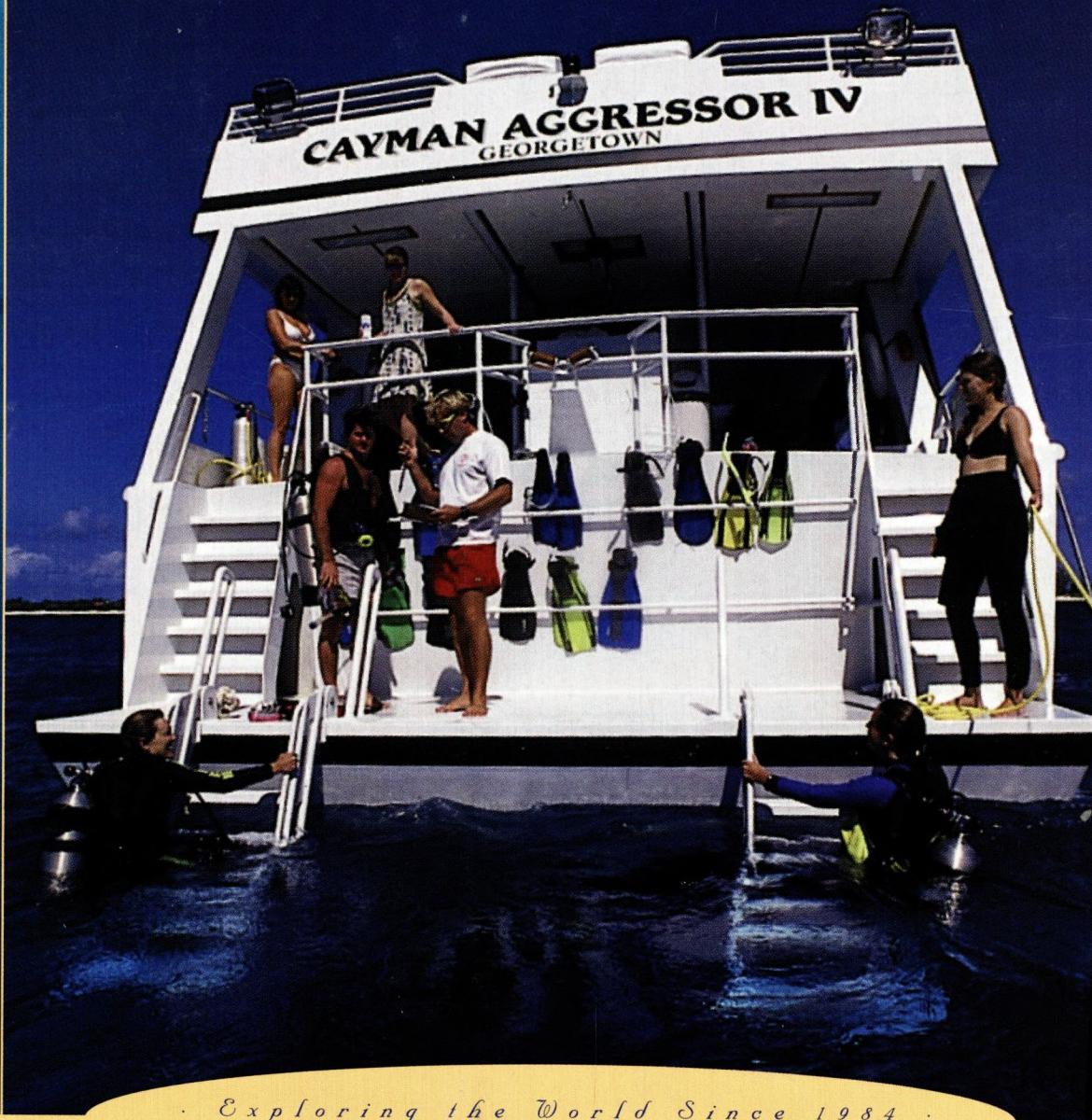
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